



## Senate poised to vote to keep government running into 2019

By LISA MASCARO, MATTHEW DALY and CATHERINE LUCEY

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate prepared to vote Wednesday to avert a federal shutdown and keep the government funded into February after President Donald Trump backed off his demand for money for a border wall with Mexico.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.,

said the short-term spending measure was a "simple" bill that would show Republicans, who control Congress now, will finish the year by not prolonging a potential crisis. It would provide money to keep the government running to Feb. 8.

"Republicans will continue to fill our duty to govern," McConnell said.

Continued on Page 3



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., joined by Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., left, and Majority Whip John Cornyn, R-Texas, right, arrives to speak to reporters about the possibility of a partial government shutdown, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018.

Associated Press



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## Ryan uses farewell address to assail politics of 'outrage'

By ALAN FRAM

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Retiring House Speaker Paul Ryan decried the outrage and bitterness that he said now color American politics in a farewell speech that also acknowledged his inability to achieve two top goals: controlling surging federal debt and reining in Medicare and other mammoth benefit programs.

"Our complex problems are absolutely solvable," Ryan said at the Library of Congress, across the street from the U.S. Capitol, where he's ending two decades in the House. "That is to say our problems are solvable if our politics will allow it."

The Wisconsin Republican's half-hour address, which touted achievements and admits shortcomings, came as he ends his three-year run as speaker. Despite GOP control of the White House and Congress the past two years, it's been a remarkably tumultuous period dominated by the erratic decision-making and verbal outbursts of President Donald Trump and Republican divisions over top issues like health care and immigration.

Underscoring the chaos Ryan was leaving behind, Congress was spending its waning hours before adjournment trying to prevent a partial government shutdown as Trump clashed with Democrats over his desire for taxpayer money to build a border wall with Mexico.

Ryan's departure comes six weeks after an Election Day that saw Democrats capture House control. Their triumph followed a campaign in which they pummeled Republicans for trying to repeal and replace former President Barack Obama's popular



House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wis., gives a farewell speech in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018.

Associated Press

health care law, a primary GOP priority.

Ryan never explicitly mentioned Trump in his remarks. But he bemoaned the divisiveness that has been a hallmark of Trump's relentless, bitter denunciations of his political opponents, often on Twitter.

"All of this gets amplified by technology, with an incentive structure that preys on people's fears, and algorithms that play on anger," he said. "Outrage has become a brand."

He said the combativeness "pulls on the threads of our common humanity in what could be our unraveling," and he conceded that he didn't know how to fix the problem.

Under Ryan, Congress approved the biggest tax cuts in decades, boosted de-

fense spending and rolled back Obama regulations protecting clean air and water. But its attempt to scuttle Obama's health care statute crashed, annual federal deficits are surging and big-ticket entitlement programs are still unchecked.

"We have taken on some of the biggest challenges of our time, and we've made a great and lasting difference in the trajectory of this country," he said, lauding Republicans for trying to tackle intractable issues like health care and immigration.

Thanks partly to the 10-year, \$1.5 trillion tax cut Republicans enacted last year, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates a record \$12.4 trillion in accumulated federal debt for

the coming decade.

"I acknowledge plainly that my ambitions for entitlement reform have outpaced the political reality, and I consider this our greatest unfinished business," he said.

While the House-passed health care bill would have culled savings from Medicaid and other programs, the effort died in the GOP-run Senate, killed by solid Democratic opposition and a handful of Republican opponents.

Ryan was elected to Congress in 1998 and became a leader of Republicans trying to shrink government. As House Budget Committee chairman, he wrote spending plans that envisioned squeezing savings from popular benefit programs like Medicare and eliminating deficits — cuts Congress never actually enacted.

He was Mitt Romney's vice presidential running mate in 2012 and became speaker in 2015 after conservative unrest prompted the abrupt resignation of his predecessor, John Boehner, R-Ohio. Ryan, 48, announced last April that he would not seek House reelection, saying he needed more family time.

On immigration, Ryan said no matter how the border wall battle is resolved, "The system will still be in need of serious reform. And no less than our full potential as a nation here is at stake."

In a departure from Trump's frequent anti-immigrant rhetoric, Ryan said a fix should include not just border security but also help for immigrants in the U.S. illegally to stay "and be a part of our American fabric." He said that should include "the undocumented population," a group estimated at around 11 million

people — far more than were in play this year in a failed attempt by Trump and Congress to address the issue.

Ryan was long a quiet force for broad immigration overhauls that conservatives opposed as going too far in offering citizenship to immigrants in the U.S. illegally. As speaker, he couldn't unify Republicans behind one approach.

Resolving the problem would take "some of the venom out of our discourse," he said.

On foreign policy, Ryan called for "committing to the pillars of international relations," a contrast with Trump's pillorying of NATO and withdrawal from some organizations. America must lead "not with bluster but with steady, principled action," he said. Ryan barely discussed last year's GOP tax cut bill, which he considers perhaps his most significant accomplishment. He cited that bill's tax breaks for investors in low-income communities and cautioned Republicans not to let efforts to ease poverty "drift from your consciousness."

The president of the Club for Growth, a conservative group that has clashed with GOP congressional leaders it considers too cautious, faulted Ryan for not pushing hard enough to cut benefit programs.

"It wasn't just the political reality. It was the failure of his leadership as the speaker to force that to be an issue," said David McIntosh. Defenders said Ryan led a House GOP that's bitterly divided between hard-right conservatives and more pragmatic lawmakers.

"He unified a very fractious majority and kept it functioning," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla. □



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### GOVERNMENT RUNNING Continued from Front

With the Senate on track to approve the measure, it would next go to the House, where lawmakers were returning to session late Wednesday evening. Votes were uncertain there, but approval was expected before Friday's deadline, when federal funding for a portion of the government expires. Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi signaled support.

The swift pace in Congress came after Trump moved off his demand. Trump has not said that he would sign such a temporary measure, but White House counselor Kellyanne Conway on Wednesday said "he'll take a look at that certainly."

On Twitter, Trump appeared to respond to criticism that he was retreating. He insisted that "one way or the other, we will win on the Wall!" Should the legislation become law, the border money fight would drag into the next Congress, which could prove even more difficult for Trump with a Democratic-led House.

Pelosi, who is poised to become House speaker, will probably be able to quickly win approval of a longer-term measure to keep government running in 2019. "Democrats will be ready to fully, responsibly fund our government in January," Pelosi said in a statement.

Democratic Rep. Nita Lowey of New York, who will take over as Appropriations Committee chairwoman, said she was disappointed that Trump and the Republican Congress "couldn't even complete their final task of funding the government" and instead chose

to "kick the can down the road for a third time."

McConnell, on the other hand, lashed out at Democrats for failing to give Trump any of the \$5 billion that he wanted for the wall. "This seems to be the reality of our political moment," McConnell said. "It seems like political spite for the president may be winning out over sensible policy."

Senate Minority leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Democrats oppose Trump's border demands because the wall is "inefficient" and because Trump, as a candidate, promised that Mexico would pay for it, which Mexico has refused to do.

"We want smart, effective border security," Schumer said. "That's not a wall."

More than 800,000 government workers are facing the prospect of being furloughed or sent to work without pay beginning at midnight Friday, disrupting government operations days before Christmas. Congress often approves pay for such affected workers retroactively, even if they were ordered to stay home.

Just last week, at a televised meeting at the White House, Trump said he would be "proud" to shut the government down over the wall. But the White House showed its willingness to budge as it became apparent the president did not have support in Congress for paying for the wall at the \$5 billion level.

The White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, indicated that Trump did not want to shut down the government and said the administration was

looking at ways to find the money elsewhere.

The stopgap measure would approve government funding at existing levels for the next several weeks, without a boost for the border. It would include a temporary extension of a national flood insurance program, the Violence Against Women Act and other measures.

At issue in the standoff is money for nine of 15 Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Interior, Agriculture, State and Justice, as well as national parks and forests. □



House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California, the speaker-designate for the new Congress in January, talks to reporters after meeting with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., as Congress and President Donald Trump bicker over his demand that lawmakers fund a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, pushing the government to the brink of a partial shutdown, in Washington, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018. Without a resolution, parts of the federal government will shut down at midnight Friday.

Associated Press

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# Obama health law sign-ups beat forecast despite headwinds

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Affordable Care Act has yet again beaten predictions of its downfall, as government figures released Wednesday showed unexpectedly solid sign-ups for health coverage next year. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said nearly 8.5 million people had enrolled as of last Saturday's deadline, with about a dozen states, including California and New York, still left to report. The preliminary number was down about 4 percent, when a much bigger loss had been expected. Different factors combined to make for an unpredictable sign-up season this



Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., left, and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Ore., wait for Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., before a news conference to press Congress to intervene on behalf of the Affordable Care Act, after a federal judge in Texas ruled it unconstitutional, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018.

Associated Press

year for former President Barack Obama's health care law, commonly referred to as "Obamacare." On the plus side, premiums

comprehensive coverage remained unaffordable for many people who don't qualify for financial help. Also, Congress repealed a requirement for Americans to get health insurance, and President Donald Trump's administration sharply scaled back advertising and opened the way for competition from lower-cost insurance that covers less.

Then last Friday, a Republican-appointed federal judge in Texas declared the whole law unconstitutional on the eve of the enrollment deadline. Obamacare supporters are planning to appeal.

Experts said the new numbers show staying power for the health law, even with its continuing political problems and premiums that remain too high for many middle-class consumers.

"Despite everything that has been thrown at this market, politically, with premium increases and also regulation changes, there is still a core group of Americans who want this insurance and buy this insurance every year," said Chris Sloan of the consulting firm Avalere Health. "They are a hardy group of people."

But the number of new customers — the key to growing the Obamacare market — remained down by about 15 percent when compared to last year. Wednesday's figures are for the 39 states using the HealthCare.gov website. Not included yet are totals from about a dozen states running their own insurance marketplaces. Also to be added in later are HealthCare.gov customers who signed up close to deadline or who left phone numbers for a callback.

In a twist, Trump administration officials said the enroll-

ment numbers rebut charges of "sabotage" coming from Democrats.

Trump has repeatedly called the health law a "disaster" and last year led an unsuccessful drive to repeal it.

Nonetheless, CMS Administrator Seema Verma said that the administration has taken strong steps to run a smooth and efficient sign-up process and that Wednesday's numbers are "another sign that the administration's efforts are working." For example, Verma said HealthCare.gov was down for less than an hour this open enrollment season.

After the Republican-led Congress repealed Obamacare's unpopular fines for people who go without health insurance, many experts predicted it would lead to a drop in enrollment. But Verma said that doesn't seem to have happened.

She said the main reason enrollment has continued to gradually erode year over year is because premiums are still unaffordable for people who don't qualify for help.

Nearly 11.8 million people signed up during last year's open enrollment season, counting consumers in all 50 states. It's possible that number could be matched again, after totals from remaining states are added. The health law provides subsidized private insurance for people who don't have coverage through their jobs. It also gives states the option to expand their Medicaid programs to cover more low-income adults. Since it passed in 2010, about 20 million people have gained coverage, keeping the nation's uninsured rate under 10 percent. □



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## Judge blocks restrictions on who can apply for asylum

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday blocked Trump administration policies that prevented immigrants who suffered gang violence or domestic abuse in their home countries from seeking asylum.

U.S. District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan declared that some of the guidance that then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued this year cannot be used to determine whether an immigrant has a credible fear of persecution or torture in their home countries, the first step to making an asylum claim in the U.S.

The judge said the administration's policy on asylum seekers violates federal immigration law and that "it is the will of Congress -- not the whims of the executive" that sets the standards for expedited removal.

It was yet another legal blow for President Donald Trump's efforts to harden immigration policies without Congress changing laws. Another case involving whether migrants can claim asylum if they crossed the border illegally was in court Wednesday in San Francisco. A judge has temporarily stopped that November policy change, and Wednesday's proceedings were to determine whether that stay should be continued. The administration has asked the Supreme Court to allow that asylum policy to go forward.

Responding to Sullivan's ruling, a Justice Department spokesman, Steven Stafford, said Sessions' guid-

ance had followed the requirements for asylum under U.S. law.

"We are reviewing our options with regard to this ruling, and we will continue to restore the rule of law in our immigration system," he said.

Trump administration officials say the asylum process is being exploited by immigrants who are counting on passing the initial credible-fear screening and being released into the country. Only about 9 percent of all people who initially claim asylum are granted it, and tens of thousands of families from Central America are coming to the U.S. every month.

The immigration policy change had an immediate impact.

Immigration lawyers say people whom they expected would pass credible-fear screenings began to fail them, and lawyers say immigration judges are signing off on more denials during appeals, effectively ending what could have been a yearslong asylum process before it began.

But Trump officials also say the number of people claiming credible fear has risen dramatically.

Asylum can be granted to people who were persecuted in their home country or could be persecuted if forced to return. Thousands of people seek asylum each month at U.S. Customs and Border Protection stations along the southwest border.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued the government over the June 11 change



In this Dec. 18, 2018 photo, Honduran asylum seekers enter the U.S. at San Diego's Otay Mesa port of entry, as seen from Tijuana, Mexico.

Associated Press

on behalf of 12 parents and children who were wrongly found not to have a credible fear of return. Sullivan's ruling impacts thousands of cases where immigrants are in expedited removal proceedings.

Among the plaintiffs was a woman identified only by a pseudonym, Grace. The ACLU said Grace's partner beat her and her children, and sexually assaulted her and her daughter. Once, the ACLU says, her daughter suffered a miscarriage after he attacked her. The lawsuit says police did not act when she contacted

them. The lawsuit says Grace was found not to have a credible fear of persecution.

The judge also ordered the government to return any of the plaintiffs who may have been deported back to the U.S., and prevent further deportations.

"This ruling is a defeat for the Trump administration's all-out assault on the rights of asylum seekers. The government's attempt to obliterate asylum protections is unlawful and inconsistent with our country's long-standing commitment to provide protection to im-

migrants fleeing for their lives," said Jennifer Chang Newell, managing attorney of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, who argued the case.

The judge who issued the ruling attracted attention on day earlier for his public excoriation of former Trump administration adviser Michael Flynn, saying he felt disgusted and disdainful of Flynn's crimes. He allowed Flynn to postpone his sentencing so Flynn could continue cooperating with investigators and get credit that could allow him to avoid prison. □

# Pope accepts resignation of L.A. bishop accused of misconduct

By JOHN ANTCAK and NICOLE WINFIELD

Associated Press

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of a Los Angeles auxiliary bishop, Monsignor Alexander Salazar, following an allegation of misconduct with a minor in the 1990s, officials said Wednesday.

The Vatican announced the resignation in a one-line statement. It was the latest in a string of cases of alleged misconduct against bishops to come to light this year, following the scandal of ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick that exposed how bishops have largely avoided sanction for improper behavior.

The current archbishop of Los Angeles, Most Rev. Jose Gomez, said the archdiocese was made aware of the claim in 2005. Gomez said county prosecutors declined to bring charges, but that the archdiocese forwarded the complaint to the Vatican office that handles sex abuse cases.

Gomez said that office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, imposed precautionary measures against Salazar and that a further investigation by the archdiocese's independent review board found the allegation to be credible.

Gomez said Salazar, 69, has "consistently denied any wrongdoing." The archdiocese said it had received no other allegations against Salazar.

"These decisions have been made out of deep concern for the healing and reconciliation of abuse victims and for the good of the church's mission," Gomez told the Los Angeles faithful in a letter. "Let us continue to stay close to the victim survivors of abuse, through our prayer and our actions." Gomez said that the alleged misconduct occurred while Salazar was a parish priest in the 1990s, and that the claim was never directly brought to the archdiocese.

Critics targeted the length of time between when the archdiocese learned of the



This Nov. 16, 2013 photo shows the Los Angeles auxiliary bishop, Monsignor Alexander Salazar in Garden Grove, Calif.

allegation and the resignation, and the lack of details in the announcement, which stated the retirement is for "early retirement."

"It takes 13 years for LA Catholic officials to disclose this allegation and even now, they withhold key details about when they and the Vatican looked at it and purported(ly) took 'precautionary measures' against Salazar, which of course have rarely stopped more clergy sex crimes," David G. Clohessy, former director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said in an email to The Associated Press.

The law firm of Jeff Anderson & Associates, which pursues litigation on behalf of alleged victims of clergy sex abuse, noted that Salazar's name wasn't included in archdiocese lists of credibly accused priests released in 2005, 2008 and this year.

"What does his resignation mean? Has he been laicized? Is he simply retired? What safety proto-

cols are being imposed on Bp. Salazar?" the firm asked in a statement. "Why did it take the Vatican this long to act?"

The resignation comes during a year in which the clerical abuse scandal has exploded anew in the U.S. and elsewhere. In July, Francis removed McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington, as a cardinal after a U.S. church investigation determined that an allegation he groped a minor in the 1970s was credible. Subsequently several adult seminarians have said he pressured them to sleep with him.

McCarrick has denied the initial allegation and through a lawyer has said he looks forward to invoking his right to due process. The McCarrick scandal exposed the loopholes in how the church treats allegations of misconduct against bishops, who are answerable only to the pope. Bishops have largely escaped the same scrutiny as ordinary priests ac-

cused of misconduct in the decades-long sex abuse scandal, and until recently they have rarely been sanctioned or removed for covering up for abusers.

Salazar was born in San Jose, Costa Rica, and came with his family to the United States in 1953. The family settled in Los Angeles, and he became a U.S. citizen at age 18. He entered St. John's Seminary in suburban Camarillo in 1977 and was ordained a priest in 1984.

From the 1980s through early 2000s, Salazar served at several parishes, the former St. Vibiana Cathedral and as vice chancellor of the Archdiocesan Catholic Center before being installed as a bishop in 2004. When his selection as auxiliary bishop was announced, he said in a statement: "California is the land of dreams and visions, but I have been blessed with more. I have been specially privileged to serve as a priest — a parish priest." He served as a regional

bishop for San Pedro, one of five pastoral subdivisions within the archdiocese, until 2009 and since then had been vicar for the office of ethnic ministries.

A statement from the archdiocese said the accusation against Salazar was "reported directly to law enforcement in 2002 by a young adult alleging misconduct in the 1990s when Bishop Salazar was a priest and the alleged victim was a minor."

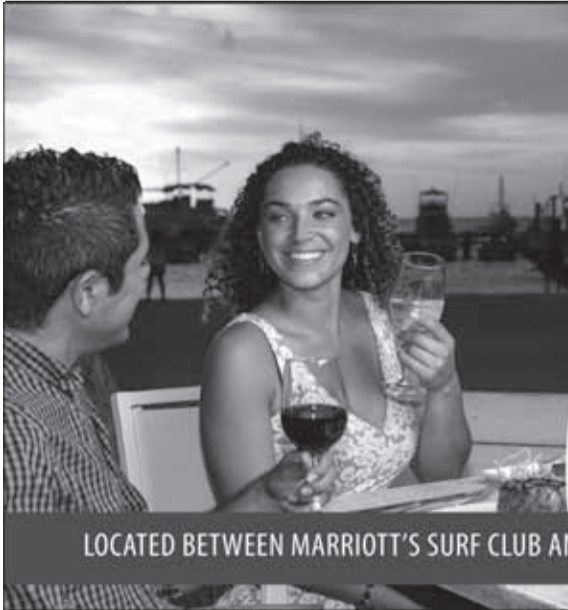
The statement said the archdiocese was informed of the allegation through a third party in 2005. Law enforcement had investigated the allegation and recommended prosecution, but the district attorney did not file charges in the case, the statement said.

The archdiocese said Cardinal Roger Mahony, who was the Los Angeles archbishop at the time, requested that law enforcement review the case, and he also reported the allegation to the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

"The Congregation investigated and permitted Bishop Salazar to remain in ministry subject to certain precautionary conditions, which he has respected," the statement said.

Mahony retired as head of the archdiocese in 2011, his tenure tarnished by his handling of clergy sex abuse cases, and was replaced by Gomez, who publicly rebuked him.

By 2014, the archdiocese had agreed to pay \$720 million to clergy abuse victims over the previous decade and released internal files that showed Mahony shielded priests and ordered a surrogate to withhold evidence from police. The archdiocese said Gomez requested a review of all allegations of sexual misconduct involving minors to update a 2004 report that listed accused priests. This investigation was conducted by the archdiocese's own Clergy Misconduct Oversight Board, which found the allegation to be credible, Gomez said in his letter. □



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# Rare Washington state tornado strongest since 1986

By LISA BAUMANN  
Associated Press

**SEATTLE (AP)** — An extremely rare tornado that touched down west of Seattle was the strongest to hit Washington state since 1986, the National Weather Service said Wednesday.

A Weather Service storm team surveyed the damage just south of Port Orchard, Washington, and rated the twister an Ef2 on the Enhanced Fujita scale with top wind speeds of up to 130 mph (210 kph). The scale rates an Ef2 as "significant."

In five minutes Tuesday afternoon, the twister's 1.4 mile-path (2.3 kilometers) tore roofs off homes, shattered windows and toppled large fir trees, but no injuries have been reported.

John Mueller's home was among those most severely damaged.

He told KOMO-TV that he was at work at a shipyard when he recognized his home in a video of the tornado on social media.

"If I could describe the house, it would be roofless,"

Mueller said. "The entire upstairs is gone. There's 2x4 and 4x4s sticking out of the walls. Glass shattered everywhere. The downstairs is just full of water and broken glass...I think (the tornado) landed on top of the house."

Washington state averages 2.5 tornadoes a year, but December tornadoes average a minute fraction, the Weather Service said. Most tornadoes in Washington are rated EF-0s that cause minor damage, Weather Service hydrologist Brent Bower said.

The Kitsap County Sheriff's office called the damage "catastrophic." Dozens of structures were affected. Fire officials were trying to complete an initial damage assessment by Wednesday night.

Deputy Scott Wilson said the twister caused "a lot of chaos."

"It's traumatic, especially as we approach the Christmas season," Wilson said.

Kitsap County Search and Rescue workers with trained dogs checked for people



Melinda St. John, center, helps her nieces, Hannah Mueller, 20, left, and Jasmin Mueller, 16, right, recover family photos from the living room of a house owned by St. John's sister Beth Mueller, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, in Port Orchard, Wash., the day after a tornado took the roof off the house and caused other damage Tuesday.

who may have been injured or stranded but found none.

Other emergency crews still inspecting homes were finding gas leaks in damaged structures, the sheriff's

office said Wednesday. Power had been restored by Wednesday to much of the affected area with the exception of the most severely damaged homes, the sheriff's office said.

Some roads remained closed.

Port Orchard is about 15 miles (24 kilometers) west of Seattle, across Puget Sound on the Kitsap Peninsula. □

## New York City police using firearms at lowest rate on record

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The New York Police Department said Wednesday that officers are using Tasers more frequently, while firing on suspects fell to the lowest level since the department began tracking the use of force.

The department's 2017 use-of-force report showed that officers opened fire 52 times last year, a 28 per-

cent decrease from previous year. But officers fatally shot 10 suspects last year, an increase from nine in 2016.

Police officers' use of Tasers, meanwhile, jumped about 45 percent last year to 728 incidents. The department attributed that increase to a wider deployment of stun guns among the ranks.

Police Commissioner James O'Neill said the statistics reflect improvements in the department's use-of-force policies, which were reformed in 2016 to require more detailed reporting of incidents involving police force.

"NYPD cops are among the most restrained law enforcement officers in the United States when it

comes to using force in the performance of their duties," O'Neill said in a statement.

O'Neill also noted that the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board last year recorded the fewest police-force complaints in more than a decade.

Chris Dunn, legal director of the New York Civil Liber-

ties Union, said his organization is "very concerned" with the department's rising use of Tasers. He noted that nearly a third of 728 Taser incidents in 2017 involved officers seeking to control an emotionally disturbed person.

"It runs the risk of seriously damaging people already in trauma," Dunn said. □

# 100 days to Brexit: EU, UK act to cushion no-deal chaos

By JILL LAWLESS  
LORNE COOK

Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — The European Union marked 100 days until Brexit on Wednesday by triggering an action plan to ensure planes can still fly and money can still flow between Britain and the bloc in the increasingly likely event that the U.K. leaves the EU without a divorce deal.

The British government, struggling to break a political logjam over Brexit, released immigration plans that it said will "take back control" of the country's borders — but which opponents warn will batter the economy by shutting out everyone but highly paid professionals.

The EU measures, announced a day after Britain ramped up its own no-deal planning, are intended to alleviate "major disruption" to people and businesses in case squabbling U.K. politicians fail to ratify a withdrawal agreement between Britain and the bloc. European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May leaves 10 Downing Street for Prime Minister's Questions at the House of Commons, in London, Wednesday Dec. 19, 2018.

Associated Press

is called the contingency plan "an exercise in limiting damage."

Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, but it's unclear whether lawmakers will approve the divorce agreement Prime Minister Theresa May's government has negotiated with the bloc. May postponed a vote in Parliament last

week because the deal faced heavy defeat. It has been rescheduled for mid-January, but opposition remains strong across the political spectrum.

Leaving without a deal risks plunging the British economy into recession and sparking chaos at the borders, as four decades of economic alignment and

open markets evaporate. The EU plan includes temporary one- to two-year measures to allow some U.K.-EU financial services to continue and a 12-month provision to keep planes flying between Britain and the bloc.

But Dombrovskis stressed that the measures "cannot replicate the benefits of the withdrawal agreement, and certainly it cannot replicate the benefits of EU membership."

Britain's no-deal preparations include putting 3,500 soldiers on standby, chartering boats to bring in goods and stockpiling medicines. The government called them sensible precautions, but opposition politicians accused May of trying to scare lawmakers into supporting her Brexit deal.

"No-deal would be a disaster for our country and no responsible government would ever allow it," Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said.

Most members of Parliament dislike both May's Brexit deal and the prospect of leaving the EU without an agreement, but they are deeply divided about what to do instead, and the country's political debate has grown increasingly bad-tempered as Brexit day approaches.

Corbyn was forced to deny calling May a "stupid wom-

an" in the House of Commons on Wednesday, after he was caught appearing to mutter the insult during a fiery debate.

"I did not use the words 'stupid woman' about the prime minister or anyone else, and am completely opposed to the use of sexist or misogynist language in absolutely any form at all," Corbyn said.

In a bid to regain some of its vanished political momentum, the British government published long-awaited plans for a post-Brexit immigration system that will end the automatic right of EU citizens to live in the U.K.

"We're going to bring an end to free movement," May said. "We will do that in a way that enables us to reduce net migration but enables us to ensure that the brightest and best can be attracted to the United Kingdom."

She said that "in the future coming here will be based on your contribution, not on the country you come from."

The government proposal places no limit on the number of well-paid, skilled immigrants who can settle in Britain, but puts curbs on "low-skilled" workers, who would only be able to get one-year working visas.

The government plan suggests setting a salary threshold that immigrants will have to meet in order to be given the right to settle in Britain.

An independent body advising the government has suggested 30,000 pounds (\$38,000) a year — above the median U.K. wage and more than the starting salary for nurses, paramedics, junior doctors and many other professions.

Saffron Cordery, deputy chief executive of NHS Providers — an umbrella group for Britain's state-funded health care system — said the health sector was "deeply concerned" about the proposal.

"High skills does not equal high pay," she told the BBC. The government said the exact salary threshold would be decided after public consultation. □

## Information regarding the Holidays

**This is to inform our readers that there will be no Aruba Today newspaper published on Tuesday 25th and Wednesday 26th of December. For this reason we are asking our clients who want to publish advertisement on Monday 24th and Thursday 27th to please deliver all ads and artwork by 5 PM, Friday December 21 latest.**

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## Sinking Greek village highlights nation's addiction to coal

By COSTAS KANTOURIS  
Associated Press

PTOLEMAIDA, Greece (AP)

— If earthquakes struck in slow motion, the results might be visible in a place like the Greek village of Anargyri, a hardscrabble enclave in a black landscape gutted by coal mining.

The village in northern Greece once had more than 400 people. Now it has fewer than 50, after being torn apart over decades. Its roads are slowly buckling, its door frames have shifted, its walls and home foundations have cracked beyond repair. Residents are leaving not in panic but out of desperation.

One after another, the tiny villages in Greece's lignite belt have been destroyed by mining as the ground becomes too unsteady to hold homes upright. Bells at one church in the area are not rung regularly for fear of causing more cracks in the walls.

Cattle farmer Michalis Bitas first noticed the damage to homes in Anargyri in 1986. "That's when mining started locally. It slowly began to eat up the houses before it went on to eat us up too," he said.

Bitas is from one of the few dozen households in the village who have refused a power company's offer to move them to a rented apartment in a nearby town. These villagers are demanding full compensation for their homes — a right only granted by law if mining occurs directly below a settlement.

"I have sheep and machinery. What am I supposed to do? Move them into an apartment?" Bitas said.



In this Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2018, signs close a damaged landslide road in the village of Anargyri near the town of Amyntio, northern Greece.

Associated Press

Heavy-duty coal excavators and vehicles on the horizon near the village look like toy trucks, dwarfed by the scale of the blackened mining fields.

Greece is still hooked on coal, despite warnings about the dire consequences of global warming issued both by a new scientific report and experts at the recent U.N. climate talks in Poland and despite ambitious European Union-wide targets to replace coal use with renewable energy.

Greece is currently the world's 12th largest producer of lignite — known as brown coal — mining 36 million tons annually, according to U.S. federal government energy data. Lignite is a low-grade coal that

throws off higher carbon dioxide emissions than black coal. It is often burned near where it is mined since its low energy density makes it too expensive to transport very far.

Nearly a third of Greece's electricity is produced by coal-fired plants and the country has no phase-out plan to stop using domestically produced coal, unlike most parts of Western Europe. Despite abundant wind and sun, only around 15 percent of Greece's energy is produced by renewable sources. Most of its reduction in coal use in recent years has been offset by an increased use of imported natural gas.

Under measures hammered out with Greece's bailout creditors, the state-controlled power company, PPC, will privatize three coal-fired electricity plants, prolonging their life.

Also, contrary to many of its EU neighbors, Greece is on course to expand its dependence on oil and gas as the nation tries to attract overseas investment to counter a financial crisis that lasted nearly a decade. The Greek government has embarked on a major exploration drive for oil and gas off its western and southern coasts.

The oil and gas ventures have alarmed environmental groups, which have issued an urgent plea to the

Greek government to reverse its course and switch investments to the renewable sources like solar and wind power.

"We must act directly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but our country is moving in the opposite direction," a letter addressed to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said. It was signed by 34 environmental and human rights groups, including Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature, Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders.

Greece is planning to invest "in fossil fuels for decades, along with worrying delivery of hundreds of thousands of square kilometers, on and offshore, for hydrocarbon extraction," the letter said. "This would surrender the country to the nightmare consequences of climate change."

In Anargyri, despite the destruction of their homes, residents have mixed feelings about coal, since PPC is a key employer that provides 5,000 local jobs. The other attraction is that lignite, mined domestically, is not vulnerable to financial market swings or geopolitical shocks, unlike imported oil and gas, which in Greece mostly comes from Russia.

"Clearly, lignite activity will be reduced and will be replaced by other sources of energy, renewable sources of energy," PPC executive Konstantinos Theodoridis told The Associated Press.

"But lignite will continue to be a strategic fuel that, in any geopolitical instability, is the only energy-producing fuel that is absolutely controlled by our country," he said. □

# Children fight, kill and die in Yemen's civil war

By **MAGGIE MICHAEL**

Associated Press

**MARIB, Yemen (AP)** — At the age of 13, Mohammed was an unflinching fighter for Yemen's Houthi rebels. Indoctrinated in their camps, he went into battle even as gunfire filled the air and the earth shook from airstrikes. He says he tortured and killed. He didn't care if he lived or died. His one comfort was the serial number on the bracelet the Houthis gave him to wear — his "jihadi number." If he died, he knew, the bracelet guaranteed his body would make it home to his family.

"When I become a martyr, they enter my number in the computer, retrieve my picture and my name, then print them with the name 'Martyr' underneath," Mohammed said.

Mohammed was among 18 former child soldiers interviewed by The Associated Press who described the Houthis' efficiency in recruiting boys as young as 10 to fight in the war against a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia and backed by the United States.

The Houthis have inducted 18,000 child soldiers into their army since the beginning of the war in 2014, a senior Houthi military official acknowledged to The Associated Press. He spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information.

That figure is higher than any number previously reported. The United Nations was able to verify 2,721 children recruited to fight for all sides in the conflict, the large majority for the Houthis, but officials say that count is likely low.

An unknown number of young fighters have been sent home in coffins. More than 6,000 children have died or been maimed in the war, the U.N. children's agency reported in October, but it could not determine how many were combatants.

Brig. Gen. Yahia Sarie, a Houthi military spokesman, denied that children under 18 are systematically recruited and told the AP



**Kahlan, a 12-year-old former child soldier, demonstrates how to use a weapon, at a camp for displaced persons where he took shelter with his family, in Marib, Yemen in this July 27, 2018 photo.**

Associated Press

that the military has issued orders to send home children trying to join its ranks. He said any children who try to enlist do so out of anger at coalition atrocities. He dismissed the accounts the children gave to the AP, saying their claims were coalition propaganda.

The AP interviewed the former child soldiers at displacement camps and a Saudi-funded rehabilitation center in the city of Marib, which is controlled by the coalition. They came to Marib after slipping away from rebel forces or being captured by coalition units. Because of their ages and because some acknowledge committing acts of brutality, the AP is only using their first names.

The war began after the Houthis, a Zaidi-Shiite insurgent movement with ties to Iran, swept down from the northern highlands in late 2014, seizing the capital, Sanaa, and then pushing south. Yemen's internationally-recognized government sought help

from Saudi Arabia, which formed the coalition with U.S. backing, determined to stop what they saw as an Iranian move to take over, turning a civil war into a proxy war.

Young soldiers can be seen manning checkpoints, AK-47s dangling from their narrow shoulders. Others are sent to the front lines as foot soldiers.

Some of the children told the AP they joined the rebels willingly, mainly because of promises of money or the chance to carry a weapon or to have a guaranteed allotment of qat, the leaves that Yemenis chew as a stimulant. But others described being abducted from schools or homes or coerced into joining in exchange for a family member's release from detention.

Recruits are taken first to "culture centers" for nearly a month of religious courses. The children are told they are joining a holy war against Jews and Christians and Arab countries that

have succumbed to Western influence.

Next, the recruits are sent to military training camps, and then to war.

"When you get out of the culture center, you don't want to go home anymore," Mohammed said.

"You want to go to jihad."

Mohammed recalled how one day his comrades fighting in the city of Taiz captured a coalition fighter and brought him to a bombed-out restaurant. Mohammed, 14 at the time, said he hooked an electrical generator up to the prisoner and sent shocks through the man's body as his commander interrogated the captive.

Finally, his commander gave this order: "Get rid of him." Mohammed said he took a heavy metal tool, heated it in a flame, then swung it, caving in the back of the man's head.

"He was my master," Mohammed said of his commander. "If he says kill, I would kill.... I would blow up myself for him."

A 13-year-old named Riyadh said half of the fighters with him on the front lines were children. He said he and his 11-year-old brother once shot and killed two enemy soldiers who refused to lay down their weapons. More often, he said, he closed his eyes tightly out of fear when he fired his rifle.

The most frightening moment came when his brother disappeared during a firefight.

He began turning over corpses on the battlefield, searching bloodied faces for his lost brother, when he and other fighters came under fire. They fired back. Then, after some yelling back and forth, he realized the shooter was his brother, lost in the fog of battle.

A 12-year-old named Kahlan said Houthi militiamen took him and 10 of his classmates from school, promising them new book bags. Instead, they found themselves inside a training camp, still in their school uniforms.

On the front lines, Kahlan recalled the trucks rumbling in to collect the dead after coalition airstrikes.

"The sight of the bodies was scary," he said, using his hands to pantomime how corpses were missing heads or limbs or had their intestines oozing out.

The Marib rehabilitation center has treated nearly 200 boys since September 2017. They suffer from aggressive behavior, panic attacks and attention deficits. Naguib al-Saadi, founder of the organization that launched the center, said the real problem will be felt in 10 years — "when a generation that has been brainwashed with hatred and enmity toward the West comes of age." □

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## Official: Ukraine plans another naval foray into Sea of Azov

Associated Press

**MOSCOW (AP)** — Ukraine plans to again send its warships into the Sea of Azov, a top Ukrainian official said, a move that could set the stage for another clash with Russia.

Oleksandr Turchynov, the secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, said in an interview with the BBC published Wednesday that another such mission is necessary to prevent Russia from claiming control over the body of water. Russia's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday denounced his remarks as a "provocation."

On Nov. 25, the Russian coast guard fired upon and seized three Ukrainian naval vessels and 24 seamen when they tried to sail from the Black Sea into the Sea of Azov. The U.S. and

its NATO allies have condemned what they described as unjustified use of force by Russia, and urged Moscow to release the boats and their crews.

Ukraine said its boats operated in line with international rules, while Russia charged that the Ukrainian vessels had failed to obtain permission to pass.

The standoff has further fueled the tug-of-war between the two neighbors over Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and support for separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko responded to the incident by introducing martial law for 30 days, something Ukraine hadn't done even after Crimea's annexation and amid large-scale fighting with Russia-backed separatists



In this Nov. 25, 2018 file photo, damage can be seen to one of three Ukrainian ships seized by Russia during a naval incident near the annexed Crimean Peninsula.

Associated Press

in the east in 2014-2015.

As part of martial law, Ukraine has beefed up its forces on the border with Russia, called up reservists for training and barred entry to all Russian males aged between 16 and 60. Amid the tensions, Russia and Ukraine accused each

other of making plans to launch a military action.

Turchynov told the BBC that it's essential for Ukraine to mount a new naval deployment into the Sea of Azov, warning that if Ukraine stands back Russia will take over sea routes and dictate its will.

"We have no alternative," he said. He said Ukraine would invite representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international organizations to put their representatives on board the Ukrainian ships during the mission. The Ukrainian official didn't say when Ukraine expects to launch it. Turchynov noted that the Ukrainian military plans to deploy new missiles onshore, adding that they would be capable of destroying the bridge linking Crimea with Russia.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova denounced Turchynov's statement as "irresponsible," adding that it would only exacerbate tensions and derail European efforts to de-escalate the situation. □

## Morocco: Terrorist ties to Scandinavian hiker slaying

By AMIRA EL-MASAITI

**RABAT, Morocco (AP)** — The lone suspect arrested in the killing of two Scandinavian tourists in Morocco's Atlas Mountains is connected to a terrorist group, and three other suspects are on the run, Moroccan authorities said Wednesday.

State television 2M reported on its website that authorities consider the two women's slayings a terrorist act. Local media reported that the suspects had links to the Islamic State group. The women, who were from Denmark and Norway, were discovered stabbed in the neck Monday by other tourists, who alerted police, according to national media. Hiking in the area was temporarily suspended.

The killings have shocked Morocco, a popular tourist

destination where such attacks on foreigners are extremely rare.

The Rabat public prosecutor's office said in a statement Wednesday that the only captured suspect has affiliations to a terrorist group, without naming the group.

The suspect was arrested in Marrakech on Tuesday. Three other suspects have been identified and but are still on the run, a security official told The Associated Press. The official was not authorized to be publicly named.

The remote mountainous region where the women were found dead is 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) from the village of Imlil — often the starting point for treks to Mount Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak.

Broadcaster 2M released

photos and videos Wednesday of forensic investigators and others working around the women's brightly colored tent on a rocky hillside. The broadcaster said the tent held food and belongings for three people, including an ID card.

Moroccan media outlets reported that investigators have video surveillance footage showing three suspects putting up a tent near the victims' tent and leaving the area after the slaying.

Authorities in Denmark and Norway warned their citizens from hiking without local guides in Morocco after the killing. Danish police officials said Wednesday they sent an officer to Morocco to assist in the investigation. Morocco is generally considered safe for tourists and is a key ally of the United



In this photo provided by Moroccan news channel 2M and taken on Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018, a security team is seen at the area where the bodies of two Scandinavian women tourists were found dead, near Imlil in the High Atlas mountains, Morocco.

Associated Press

States and Europe in the fight against terrorism. Morocco has struggled for years with sporadic Islamic

extremism, and more than 1,000 Moroccans are believed to have joined the Islamic State group. □

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## Japan wants Seoul's political decision on forced labor row

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan's top diplomat said Wednesday that South Korea's government taking action to resolve a legal dispute stemming from South Korean court rulings on forced labor during Japanese colonial rule is emerging as a key diplomatic priority.

Foreign Minister Taro Kono said in a speech on the country's diplomatic outlook that the dispute represents deteriorating ties between the two nations. Tokyo is waiting for Seoul to take steps to uphold the 1965 compensation treaty that has served as the legal foundation for bilateral relations, he said.

"The South Korean supreme



Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono speaks at a press conference in Tokyo Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018.

Associated Press

court rulings worry me," Kono said. "But I'm confident that the South Korean side will handle appropriately so that the legal foun-

datation of our relationship won't be damaged, and we will be waiting." South Korea's top court recently ordered Japanese

companies to compensate Korean plaintiffs who were forced to work at factories and mines during Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. The court in October ordered Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp. to pay 100 million won (\$87,680) each to four plaintiffs for their wartime forced labor at the company. The court made similar rulings on another company, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, triggering disputes between the two countries. Earlier this month, lawyers representing the Korean plaintiffs said they will start a legal process to freeze some of Nippon Steel's assets in South Korea if the company doesn't agree to

negotiate compensation by Christmas Eve. Tokyo has urged Seoul to seek ways to protect Japanese companies from financial damage.

The recent rulings in South Korea are threatening to undermine relations with Japan, which has argued that the issue of forced laborers was settled when Tokyo and Seoul signed a treaty in 1965 that restored diplomatic ties and had Japan provide \$500 million to South Korea in economic assistance rather than compensation. South Korea says the treaty does not terminate individuals' right to seek compensation for the inhumane experiences they were forced into. □

## Police raid home of Brazil cabinet minister in graft probe

By MARCELO SILVA DE SOUSA

**RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)** — Brazilian Federal Police raided the home of Science and Technology Minister Gilberto Kassab Wednesday following accusations that he received millions in bribes from the JBS food company between 2010 and 2016. Prosecutors said they suspect that the minister may have received as much as \$13.8 million in exchange for defending the interests of JBS during his tenures as mayor of Sao Paulo and as a congressman.

Brazil's Supreme Court authorized the operation, which included a total of six search warrants in the states of Sao Paulo and Rio Grande do Norte, followed

a request by Attorney General Raquel Dodge.

The Attorney General's Office said the raid on Kassab's residence in Sao Paulo followed testimony by the owner of JBS, Wesley Batista, and executive Ricardo Saud, who said that they were responsible for paying the bribes. Batista and Saud are receiving preferential treatment in exchange for their testimony in a variety of corruption cases.

In a statement to Brazilian paper G1, Kassab defended himself saying, "Throughout my years of public service I have never been compromised. I make myself available at the disposition of the courts."

According to the Attorney General's Office, Kassab re-



In this Sept. 5, 2018 handout photo released by Agencia Brasil, Science and Technology Minister Gilberto Kassab attends a session in Congress, in Brasilia, Brazil.

Associated Press

ceived a monthly payment from JBS between 2010 and 2016 to defend the interests of the company. To obscure the payment, it said,

JBS signed a fictitious contract to provide services with a transport company that had a relationship with J&F, the holding company

of JBS.

It also said JBS made cash campaign donations in 2014 to the Social Democratic Party — then chaired by Kassab — which was part of a coalition backing Workers Party presidential candidate Dilma Rousseff. On November 9, the Federal Police arrested Joesley Batista, former director of JBS, one of the world's largest food companies, as part of an investigation into corruption and irregularities between 2014 and 2015 in the Ministry of Agriculture. However, only three days later the Supreme Court ordered him released, ruling the arrest was unjustified due to Batista's willingness to cooperate and the antiquity of the accusations. □

## LOCAL



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The Townhouses are the first to be built in phase 1 of the development. And as a matter of fact we already started with the foundation. The spacious Townhouses have a covered entrance porch with a little bench. There is a private parking space in front of each Townhouse. The luxury kitchen, living and dining room is one big light space with sliding doors in the



front and the back to give you access to your covered terrace. The wooden staircase leads you to the second floor. At the front is the master bedroom with bathroom and access to the balcony. At the rear side there are 2 more bedrooms and one bathroom.

Not only the design is modern. The material and techniques that are being used are unique and new for Aruba. Traditionally houses on the island are built with concrete blocks. The Townhouses will be built with cellular concrete which is

pre-fabricated in The Netherlands where it is used a lot. Cellular concrete is lightweight and provides structure, insulation and it is fire and mold-resistant. Because of the fact that it is pre-fabricated, the building of the Townhouses will go fast and Tuscany expects the first home owners to move in by the beginning of August 2019.

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Lobster Cappuccino are the delicious appetizers you may choose from. Main courses that tickle your taste buds are Beef Rib Eye, Caribbean Sea Bass and Shrimp, Duck & Pork belly, Apple Wood Smoked Bacon Pasta and Asparagus Risotto.

Heavenly desserts that are part of the menu: Duo of Quesillo and Brownie, Cheesecake, Chocolate Forest Fruit, Crispy apple pie, Chef's Dessert Surprise.

Please be advised that The Restaurant will not be offering their regular a la carte menu during this special. Reservations are required. □

## Honoring at the Manchebo Beach Resort and Spa

**PALM BEACH** — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly

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This lovely couple stated that they love the island very much, especially for the year-round sunny weather, blue waters and sandy beaches and Aruba's warm and friendly people.

Ms. Richardson together with the representatives of the Manchebo Beach Resort and Spa presented the certificate to the honorees, and also handed over some presents and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home away from home. □



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## Christmas Lights

ORANJESTAD — Christmas in Aruba would not be complete without a visit to see the Christmas Lights around the island. By just driving around on the main roads you can enjoy a variety of creativity with colorful lights being displayed on various Aruban homes. Also the majority of the roundabouts are decorated.

If you are lucky enough you might hear Christmas carols and "gaitas" at any of these locations but also at the malls and stores. Gaita is a style of Venezuelan folk music from Maracaibo in Zulia State. It is possibly derived from gaites, the Gothic word for goat, the animal whose skin generally is used for the membrane of the furro instrument (kind of tambura with stick). Other instruments used in gaita include maracas, cuatro, charrasca and tambora (Venezuelan drum). Song themes range from humorous and love songs to protest songs. The local gaita bands are composed mostly of a group of ladies who sing with angelic voices while they dance in a choreographic manner.

The map shown here will give you an overview of the most popular decorated places around the island. So hop into your car or call a taxi driver to go around and enjoy the spectacular Christmas scenes. □

**BAN WAK LUZ**  
*Route to the Christmas lights*  
2018

**Locations**

- 1. Rockets pitch (@ private home)
- 2. Cas Ariba / Urataka
- 3. Warawara, Santa Cruz
- 4. Jan Flemming House
- 5. WEB Christmas Lights
- 6. Lourdes Grotto
- 7. Parish Hillweg, San Nicolas
- 8. House of Lights Weg Sero Preto
- 12. Queen Beatrix Int. Airport
- 15. Promenade, San Nicolas

**Roundabouts**

- 9. Hato
- 10. Belgiestraat
- 11. APA
- 12. Queen Beatrix Int. Airport
- 13. Pos Chiquito, Savaneta
- 14. Elmar
- 15. Promenade, San Nicolas
- 16. Tarabana



▲ LOCATION ▲ ROUNDABOUT ▲ BOTH



## Meet Urgent Care Aruba (UCA)



**NOORD** — It is your worst nightmare during a vacation, but if it happens you'd better cure it as quickly and professional as possible. I am talking about health issues that occur during your relaxing holidays and that need immediate urgent attention. Where do you go on Aruba? Easy: grab a cab for the short ride to Urgent Care Aruba (UCA) at the Noord Medical Center and be attended prompt without schedule by highly trained and experienced physicians.

For more than 28 years Dr. Carlos Yagua Sr. and his wife Dr. Noris Velasquez, have a practice on the island that runs with success and out of that seed grew the first and only private Urgent Care Center. This on initiative of their four children, all physicians, who wanted to create an alternative to the crowded ER. Big and small health issues are being offered a quick, reliable and efficient solution here under the direction of Dr. Carlos Yagua Jr. who is general physician with a dual-master's degree in healthcare and business administration.

### Taking Care

The people taking care of you in Urgent Care Aruba (UCA) are medical assistants and nurses who work in coordination with registered physicians, all here to attend to your needs. There are ten consultation rooms for patients, all furnished with the latest equipment like for example a nursing station supplied for specific procedures, digital vitals' monitors, and green energy efficient white bright LED surgical lights, crash carts, on-screen diagnostic systems, electrocardiograph (heart screening) and ultrasound. The clinical laboratory is ISO 9001 Certified and ISO 15189 Accredited, and UCA also offers point-of-care testing. Results are received within minutes, allowing UCA to provide you with a reliable diagnosis.

### Where, When and How

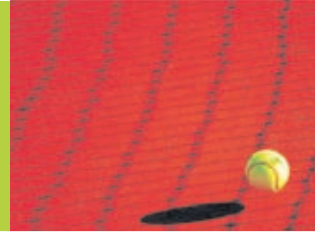
Open from Monday thru Friday 8am to 11pm, Saturday from 8am to 5pm, and is on call 24/7, English, Spanish, Dutch or Papiamentu are spoken by a medical professional and rates are low for self-pay patients. The center accepts most major travel insurance plans. You can see actual waiting times through a web-check in portal and you can book your appointment.

Location is at Noord Medical Center (Grey Building) at Noord 63. Phone: +297-586-0448 or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/urgentcarearuba/>





## SPORTS



## MLB, union, Cuba reach deal for players to sign

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN  
and RONALD BLUM

Associated Press

**HAVANA (AP)** — Major League Baseball, its players' association and the Cuban Baseball Federation reached an agreement that will allow players from the island to sign big league contracts without defecting, an effort to eliminate the dangerous trafficking that had gone on for decades.

The agreement, which runs through Oct. 31, 2021, allows Cubans to sign under rules similar to those for players under contract to clubs in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

"For years, Major League Baseball has been seeking to end the trafficking of baseball players from Cuba by criminal organizations by creating a safe and legal alternative for those players to sign with major league clubs," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement Wednesday. "We believe that this agreement accomplishes that objective and will allow the next generation of Cuban players to pursue their dream without enduring many of the hardships experienced by current and former Cuban players who have played Major League Baseball."

Depending on the quality of future players, the agreement could mean millions of dollars in future income for the cash-poor Cuban federation, which has seen the quality of players and facilities decline in recent years as talent went overseas.

Continued on Page 23

# HART BROKEN



Hart stops 20 shots in debut,  
Flyers top Red Wings 3-2

Philadelphia Flyers' Carter Hart acknowledges the crowd after an NHL hockey game against the Detroit Red Wings, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018, in Philadelphia. Philadelphia won 3-2.

# APNewsBreak: Feds eye move to regulate legal sports betting



In this Thursday, Dec. 13, 2018, file photo, gamblers place bets in the temporary sports betting area at the SugarHouse Casino in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

**ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP)** — A pair of U.S. senators from opposing parties is proposing that the federal government take back control of sports gambling in America, the first formal move by Congress after a Supreme Court ruling reopened a complex debate over fans betting on games and who controls the action. Several states have begun offering sports betting after New Jersey won a long-fought challenge in May, and many others are expected to take up the issue during new legislative sessions in 2019 as a way to generate millions in revenue. The federal bill introduced Wednesday by Sen. Charles Schumer, a New York Democrat, and Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah would have the U.S. Justice Department set minimum standards for states to offer sports betting. It does not explicitly provide the sports leagues the cut of gambling revenue they have been seeking, so-called "integrity fees," but does not prohibit them, either. "I knew that Congress had an obligation to ensure that the integrity of the

games we love was never compromised," Schumer said of the Sports Wagering Market Integrity Act of 2018. "That is why I believe the time is now to establish a strong national integrity standard for sports betting that will protect consumers and the games themselves from corruption." Hatch said that once the Supreme Court struck down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act in May, "I began working with stakeholders to ensure we were doing everything possible to protect the integrity of sports from corruption. "The legislation we've introduced today is the culmination of eight months of high-level meetings, discussions, and negotiations, and will serve as a placeholder for the next Congress, should they decide to continue working to address these issues," said Hatch, who is retiring soon but wanted to show bipartisan support for federal regulation. The NFL weighed in Wednesday with a letter to the senators expressing support for the bill. "The threats posed to the integrity of sporting con-

tests cannot be confined within state borders," wrote Jocelyn Moore, an NFL executive vice president. "Without continued federal guidance and oversight, we are very concerned that sports leagues and state governments alone will not be able to fully protect the integrity of sporting contests and guard against the harms Congress has long recognized as being associated with sports betting." Likewise, Major League Baseball said in a statement, "Legalized sports betting is rapidly spreading across the country, creating a clear need for a set of consistent, nationwide integrity standards to protect the sports that millions of Americans love." The PGA Tour called for establishment of a national body to oversee the integrity of sports in the United States. The bill also would provide federal funding from sports betting taxes for programs to address problem gambling. The eight states that already offer sports betting could still offer it while the Justice Department evaluates the state laws.

So far, legislatures in Nevada, New Jersey, Delaware, West Virginia, Mississippi, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island have legalized sports betting. And although New Mexico has not passed a sports betting law, the Santa Ana Star Casino & Hotel started taking sports bets in October through a tribal gambling compact. City lawmakers in Washington also voted to legalize sports betting in the District of Columbia on Tuesday, legislation that requires Congressional approval but would make the nation's capital the first U.S. jurisdiction without casinos to authorize sports books. Several states have already pre-filed sports betting bills for early 2019, including Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Virginia, and Eilers & Krejcik Gaming, which tracks sports betting legislation, predicts 30 states will consider legislation in the new year. The bill would require sports wagering operators use data provided or licensed by the leagues. Legislating that could be tough as data source requirements have been challenged in court in other

ways, with courts holding that fantasy sports operators aren't required to use official league data. Some leagues, like the NBA and MLB, have reached private agreements with casinos for use of data, particularly for wagers made during games on outcomes within each contest. The federal bill also would create a National Sports Wagering Clearinghouse to receive and share sports wagering data and suspicious transaction reports among sports wagering operators, state regulators, sports organizations and federal and state law enforcement. New Jersey's Supreme Court victory set up a patchwork of laws and rules that differ from state to state. Leagues including the NBA, NFL, MLB and NHL have sought one uniform set of rules nationwide. The bill would allow betting on the Olympics and college sports, but would ban it on other amateur sports. It also would establish a nationwide self-exclusion list that people with gambling problems can add their names to in order to prohibit sports betting providers from allowing them to bet, similar to state lists that casinos maintain. It remains to be seen whether the bill has enough support in the incoming Congress to progress. The casino industry's main trade association, the American Gaming Association, called the bill "the epitome of a solution in search of a problem," adding that questions like which data should be used by companies should be worked out by the free market, not legislated by government. But Schumer said he will push hard for the bill, noting that his political differences with Hatch indicate it is something that has support from both parties. "No bet is ever a guaranteed win, but it's a smart bet that I will strongly advocate for this bill to move forward and that Congress will vote to pass federal legislation very soon," Schumer said. □

# Catch your own dinner with Driftwood!

*Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: Hook and Cook your Own Fish!*



Captain Herby would catch the fish to be served at the restaurant the same day. That concept still lives, what is 'hooked' during the day is cooked in the evening at the restaurant. Herby shares his experience with his crew, who take out guests daily on their tournament rigged 35ft twin engine

Bertram "Driftwood" or on their more spacious 37ft twin engine Bertram called "Living Easy". Both yachts are available for charters from 8am to 12 noon, or from 1 to 5pm (6-hour trips also available). To book a fishing charter visit [www.driftwoodfishingcharters.com](http://www.driftwoodfishingcharters.com) or call Herbert direct at (297)-5924040.



Have an authentic seafood dining experience at Driftwood Restaurant, situated in the characteristic downtown Oranjestad. This comfortable downtown restaurant has a long tradition (30 years) of serving the freshest fish, the biggest shrimp, and the most succulent Caribbean Lobster. Opening Hours: 5:00pm to 10:30pm (closed on Sundays) For reservations visit [www.driftwoodaruba.com](http://www.driftwoodaruba.com) or call (297)-5832515 Address: Klipstraat 12. Oranjestad, Aruba

Oranjestad- Renaissance Marina Downtown is home to the Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fishermen of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood. Herby senior and Herby Junior both share a passion and love for fishing. They know what the local waters have to offer and what fresh fish really means. Over 30 years ago, the idea for the fishing charter was born.



## Olympic Swimmer Missy Franklin retires, citing chronic pain

**By The Associated Press**  
Five-time Olympic champion Missy Franklin is retiring from swimming at age 23, citing chronic shoulder pain that has affected her for the last 2½ years. She announced her plans Wednesday in a letter posted on ESPN.com. Franklin's spokeswoman says the swimmer is with her family in Colorado for the holidays and isn't commenting further for now. Franklin's success and bubbly personality made her a darling of the 2012 London Olympics. At age 17, she became the first woman to win four gold medals in a single Olympics in any sport. "It took me a long time to say the words, 'I am retiring,'" Franklin wrote. "A long, long time. But now I'm ready. I'm ready to not be in pain every day. I'm ready to become a wife, one day a mother. I'm ready to continue growing each and

every day to be the best person and role model I can be. I'm ready for the rest of my life." Franklin is engaged to Hayes Johnson, a former Texas swimmer. She won six golds at the 2013 world championships in Barcelona in what would be her last major success. Instead of turning professional, Franklin chose to attend college at the University of California, Berkeley, and compete for the Golden Bears. She helped them win the 2015 NCAA championship but developed a nagging back injury. Franklin failed to win an individual gold at the 2014 Pan Pacific championships or 2015 world championships. She turned pro before the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games and returned home to train under Todd Schmitz, with whom she started in the sport. Four months before Rio, she withdrew from a meet with shoulder pain



In this Aug. 3, 2012, file photo, United States' Missy Franklin reacts to her gold medal win in the women's 200-meter backstroke final at the Aquatics Centre in the Olympic Park during the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

Associated Press

and later revealed she was struggling with depression, anxiety and insomnia. In Rio, Franklin failed to make the finals in either of her two individual events and won her only medal, a gold, by swimming the preliminary heat of the 4x200-meter freestyle relay. She was not one of the four Americans who stood atop the podium after the U.S. won the final.

"Looking back, surviving through those eight days in Rio was the greatest accomplishment of my career," Franklin wrote in her retirement letter. "I was able to stay true to who I was as much in failure and disappointment as I had in winning and being the best in the world." She had surgery on both shoulders in January and February 2017, but the pain

never completely subsided. Early this year, she enrolled at Georgia but was never able to regain the form she displayed as a teenager. Franklin's last competitive race was in the 200 free at the U.S. nationals in July. She finished third in the C final. She is the current world record holder in the 200 backstroke and won 27 career medals in international competition. □

# Hart, Gordon win in debuts as Flyers top Red Wings 3-2

By The Associated Press

**PHILADELPHIA (AP)** — Carter Hart made 22 saves in his NHL debut and Shayne Gostisbehere and James van Riemsdyk each had a goal and an assist as the Philadelphia Flyers defeated the Detroit Red Wings 3-2 on Tuesday night and made interim coach Scott Gordon a winner in his first game.

Radko Gudas also scored for Philadelphia, which snapped a four-game losing streak.

The Flyers were playing their first game since head coach Dave Hakstol was fired on Monday, a more that capped a tumultuous few weeks. General manager Ron Hextall was fired last month and new GM Chuck Fletcher ended Hakstol's four-year tenure after a 1-4 road trip was punctuated by Saturday's 5-1 loss at Vancouver. The Flyers entered the game last in the Eastern Conference with 28 points.

Fletcher promoted Gordon from the Flyers' AHL Lehigh Valley affiliate.

Dennis Cholowski and Jacob de la Rose scored for Detroit, which has lost four in a row and five of six.

## MAPLE LEAFS 7, DEVILS 2

**NEWARK, N.J. (AP)** — John Tavares, Auston Matthews and Patrick Marleau scored in the opening 13:38 to lead Toronto.

Nazem Kadri matched his career high with three assists and Mitch Marner and Morgan Rielly added second-period goals as Toronto embarrassed New Jersey for the second time this season and won for the seventh time in 11 games. Tyler Ennis scored two late goals.

Frederik Andersen made 27 saves in winning for the second time in his last five starts.

Sami Vatanen and Nico Hischier scored for the struggling Devils, who are 3-6-6 in their last 15 games. Keith Kinkaid gave up five goals on 21 shots before being lifted with New Jersey down 5-1 after 40 minutes.

## PANTHERS 5, SABRES 2

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)** — Ev-



Philadelphia Flyers' Carter Hart, left, blocks a shot as Detroit Red Wings' Justin Abdelkader, center, and Travis Sanheim look for the rebound during the first period of an NHL hockey game, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

genii Dadonov had two goals and an assist to pace Florida.

Troy Brouwer, Aleksander Barkov and Frank Vatrano also scored for the Panthers, who scored three goals in a span of 2:44 in the third period. Roberto Luongo made 30 saves.

Jeff Skinner and Rasmus Ristolainen scored for Buffalo, which lost to Florida for the seventh consecutive time. Carter Hutton made 30 saves.

## RANGERS 3, DUCKS 1

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Kevin Hayes scored on a short-handed breakaway with 40 seconds remaining and New York rallied to beat Anaheim.

Vladislav Namestnikov had a goal and two assists, and Filip Chytil added an empty-netter in the Rangers' three-goal third period. Alexandar Georgiev, called up on Sunday after a stint in the minors, stopped 14 shots to help New York win for the second time in eight games (2-3-3).

Pontus Aberg scored on a deflection in the second period for the Ducks, who had won nine of their previous 10 games. Chad Johnson, claimed off waivers from St. Louis on Dec. 11, finished with 21 saves in his Anaheim debut.

## SHARKS 4, WILD 0

**ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)** — Logan Couture scored twice and Martin Jones made 26 saves for his first shutout this season and the 20th of his career in San Jose's win over Minnesota.

Joe Pavelski added his 21st goal for San Jose, which has won five straight games and seven of eight. Sharks rookie Lukas Radil had an empty-net goal and one assist.

Devan Dubnyk stopped 21 shots for Minnesota, which has lost seven of 10.

## BLACKHAWKS 2, PREDATORS 1

**CHICAGO (AP)** — Cam Ward made 30 saves in his first start since Corey Crawford was sidelined by a concussion, helping Chicago top Nashville.

Defensemen Gustav Forsling and Erik Gustafsson scored for last-place Chicago, which had dropped 10 of 11. Patrick Kane picked up an assist on Gustafsson's tiebreaking goal in the second period, giving him at least one point in seven of his last eight games.

Kevin Fiala scored for the Predators, who dropped to 0-6-2 in their last eight road games. Pekka Rinne had 34 stops.

## STARS 2, FLAMES 0

**DALLAS (AP)** — Ben Bishop got help from backup Anton Khudobin in a com-

bined shutout and Dallas beat Pacific Division-leading Calgary.

Jamie Benn and Radek Faksa scored for the Stars. Bishop was injured with 6:23 remaining in the second period when Garnet Hathaway skated into him behind the net. Khudobin closed out the period with three saves, and Bishop returned for the third, when he made 12 of his 21 stops. Hathaway was penalized for goaltender interference.

Dallas returned from an 0-4 trip to win their fifth straight home game. The Flames had won three straight and eight of nine.

David Rittich stopped 26 shots for the Flames.

## ISLANDERS 3, COYOTES 1

**GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP)** — Robin Lehner stopped 35 shots, Anthony Beauvillier scored his fourth goal in five games and New York beat struggling Arizona.

Arizona's Mario Kempe scored in the first period, but Joshua Ho-Sang answered and Brock Nelson put New York ahead with a goal early in the second. Beauvillier made it a two-goal lead and Ryan Pullock had two assists for the Islanders, who withstood a late power play to win their third straight. Darcy Kuemper stopped 29 shots for the

Coyotes in their sixth loss in seven games since a four-game winning streak.

## BLUES 4, OILERS 1

**EDMONTON, Alberta (AP)** — Pat Maroon was credited with the tiebreaking goal following a replay review early in the third period, and St. Louis went on to beat Edmonton.

David Perron, Vladimir Tarasenko and Jaden Schwartz also scored for the Blues, who have won three of four. Brayden Schenn had three assists.

Jesse Puljujarvi scored for the Oilers, who had won six straight home games.

Maroon's goal came 2:19 into the final period. Officials declared the puck crossed the line during a goal-mouth scramble, even though initially no goal was called on the ice.

## LIGHTNING 5, CANUCKS 2

**VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP)** — Nikita Kucherov had a goal and an assist to reach 50 points this season and lead Tampa Bay.

A feisty Canucks squad kept pace with Tampa Bay in a heated game marked by a flurry of fights, but couldn't overpower the top team in the NHL.

Cedric Paquette, Adam Erne, Steven Stamkos and Ondrej Palat also scored for the Lightning (26-7-2). Tampa Bay has not lost in regulation since Nov. 27.

Tyler Motte and Chris Tanev had the goals for the Canucks (16-17-4).

Anders Nilsson stopped 34 of 38 shots for Vancouver, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 36 saves for Tampa Bay.

## KINGS 4, JETS 1

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Austin Wagner scored twice and Los Angeles snapped a four-game losing streak.

Alex Iafallo and Nate Thompson each had a goal and Jonathan Quick made 27 saves for the Kings, who ended Winnipeg's five-game winning streak.

Mathieu Perreault scored for the fifth straight game and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 27 shots as the Jets lost for only the second time in 11 games. Winnipeg also had won five in a row on the road. □

# Chargers lead Pro Bowl selections with 7 players

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The Los Angeles Chargers placed seven players in the Pro Bowl, including safety Derwin James, one of six rookies across the league to make the game.

James, a first-round draft choice, will be joined on the AFC squad by veteran quarterback Philip Rivers, wide receiver Keenan Allen, running back Melvin Gordon, defensive end Melvin Ingram, center Mike Pouncey and special-teamer Adrian Phillips for the game, which will be played Jan. 27 in Orlando. James and Phillips are the only starters, though.

Rivers is a backup to Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes, one of 29 first-time Pro Bowlers. That, of course, includes all the rookies: James, Giants running back Saquon Barkley, Seahawks punter Michael Dickson, Broncos running back Phillip Lindsay, Indianapolis guard Quenton Nelson and Cleveland cornerback Denzel Wads. Lindsay is an undrafted player.

New England's Tom Brady is the other AFC quarterback, making it for the 14th time. Noticeably missing is the Colts' Andrew Luck.

New Orleans, led by quarterback Drew Brees, Dallas and Chicago paced the NFC with five players each. Brees is the starter, backed up by Green Bay's Aaron

Rodgers and the Rams' Jared Goff.

Buffalo, Oakland and Tampa Bay had no Pro Bowl selections.

Pittsburgh and Kansas City each had six players chosen, including such first-timers as Steelers running back James Conner and Mahomes, both having breakthrough years.

Cleveland has a first overall draft choice in the game — not Baker Mayfield, but 2017 top pick Myles Garrett at defensive end.

"Football is a team game and you can't do it on your own," said Garrett, who leads the Browns with 12½ sacks. "I'm happy to be able to share this experience with Denzel because this honor is really a testament to our entire defense." Among the perennial AFC choices returning to the game are Houston DE J.J. Watt, Pittsburgh WR Antonio Brown, Baltimore guard Marshal Yanda and safety Eric Weddle, Cincinnati DT Geno Atkins and Denver LB Von Miller.

"To get recognized by your peers, the coaches and the fans, it means a lot," Weddle said. "It's always special to put in the hard work and to try your best and then get recognized. The Pro Bowl is something I never take for granted, and I'm pretty stoked about it. Each year you just work hard and



In this Dec. 13, 2018 file photo Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) flips the ball during the first half of an NFL football game against the Los Angeles Chargers in Kansas City, Mo. Associated Press

try to play your very best. To receive recognition for what you do on the field, even if it may not show up in other areas, is awesome." For the NFC, frequent repeaters include Atlanta WR Julio Jones and C Alex Mack, Dallas tackle Tyron Smith, inside LBs Luke Kuechly of Carolina and Bobby Wagner of Seattle, Arizona CB Patrick Peterson, Rams DT Aaron Donald and Bears LB Khalil Mack.

One of the newcomers, Chicago DT Akiem Hicks, sounded overwhelmed by the honor.

"I have played the game of football my entire life and this is the greatest accolade I've ever achieved," he said.

There will be a brother combination at center for the AFC as Maurkice Pouncey of Pittsburgh is the starter ahead of Mike Pouncey. The Jets, despite a 4-10 re-

cord, have three Pro Bowlers in safety Jamal Adams, kicker Jason Myers and return specialist Andre Roberts — all first-timers.

Pro Bowl coaching staffs will be from the losing teams in the AFC and NFC divisional playoffs with the best regular-season records. Each player on the winning Pro Bowl team receives \$67,000, while each player on the losing squad earns \$34,000. □

# Hall of Fame President David Baker gets 5-year extension

By **BARRY WILNER**  
AP Pro Football Writer

David Baker is remaining president and CEO of the Pro Football Hall of Fame under a five-year extension and will take the role of chairman of Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village. Baker will oversee the \$889 million mixed-use development project underway around the Hall of Fame's campus in Canton, Ohio. He began running the hall in 2014.

The Hall of Fame has expanded its imprint throughout football. Baker says the development of the village will result in the first sports and entertainment

"smart city. Two major components already are operating: Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium and the National Youth Football & Sports Complex.

"David has made a profound impact on raising the profile of the Pro Football Hall of Fame," Hall of Fame running back Curtis Martin said. "His leadership has created a platform for me and other Hall of Famers to use this game as a way to inspire others."

Baker is a former mayor of Irvine, California, and former commissioner of the Arena Football League. His son Sam played for the Atlanta Falcons.

At 6-foot-9 and nearly 400 pounds, David Baker is hard to miss. Jerry Kramer called him "pretty" when Baker knocked on his hotel room door to tell the Green Bay Packers great he made the Hall of Fame last year.

Baker describes the hall as "more than football and more than the worship of football heroes. We all might think these guys fell out of bed great, but what makes them great is ... they have dragged as many people up with them."

Baker points to the growth of the game's popularity beyond the United States. The Hall of Fame is staging a high school all-star game

in Mexico this week, where 30 recruits will announce their choice of college. The Black College Hall of Fame is now part of the Canton campus.

Baker will oversee a massive development that received a commitment for more than \$100 million over 18 years from Johnson Controls. The village will include the already completed stadium; the youth sports complex; an indoor arena; a center for athletic performance and safety; a player care center; and hotel.

"Great progress has been made," he said. "And I know that the very best is still ahead." □



In this Nov. 1, 2018, file photo, Pro Football Hall of Fame president David Baker speaks during halftime of an NFL football game between the San Francisco 49ers and the Oakland Raiders in Santa Clara, Calif.

Associated Press

# Russell helps Nets hold off Lakers for 6-game winning streak

**By The Associated Press**  
**NEW YORK (AP)** — D'Angelo Russell had 22 points and a career high-tying 13 assists against his former team, and the Brooklyn Nets ran the NBA's longest winning streak to six games by beating the Los Angeles Lakers 115-110 on Tuesday night. Joe Harris added 19 points and Spencer Dinwiddie scored 18 for the Nets, who last won six in a row from March 25 to April 3, 2015. Rondae Hollis-Jefferson finished with 17 points and Jared Dudley made some big baskets down the stretch to score 13.

LeBron James bounced back from his lowest-scoring game of the season with 36 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists, but the Lakers finished 1-3 on their road trip. Kyle Kuzma had 22 points and 11 rebounds, while Lonzo Ball scored 23. Brooklyn continued its recovery from an eight-game skid by holding on in front of a loud, large crowd that alternated cheering when the Lakers seized the momentum and when the Nets regained it.

**NUGGETS 126, MAVERICKS 118**

**DENVER (AP)** — Nikola Jokic had 32 points and 16 rebounds, Jamal Murray dished out a career-high 15 assists and Denver extended its home winning streak to seven games by beating Dallas.

At 21-9, the Nuggets matched the 1976-77 squad for the best start through 30 games in the franchise's NBA history. They also remain on top of the Western Conference by percentage points over Golden State. This is rarefied air for the Nuggets: The last time they had played more than 25 games and were alone in first place in the conference was March 1977.

Murray contributed 22 points for the injury-depleted Nuggets, including 10 in the fourth quarter.

Luka Doncic had a big game for Dallas with 23 points and a career-best 12



Brooklyn Nets' D'Angelo Russell (1) shoots over Los Angeles Lakers' Kyle Kuzma (0) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018, in New York. The Nets won 115-110.

Associated Press

assists, while Harrison Barnes scored 30. The Mavericks hit 15 3-pointers against the NBA's top long-range defense.

**CAVALIERS 92, PACERS 91**

**INDIANAPOLIS (AP)** — Larry Nance Jr.'s buzzer-beating tip-in for Cleveland snapped Indiana's seven-game winning streak.

Nance finished with 15 points and a career-high 16 rebounds in the Cavaliers' third road win of the season. Rodney Hood scored 17 to lead Cleveland (8-23).

The Pacers (20-11) were led by Domantas Sabonis' 17 points, but they never took control long enough to pull away. Victor Oladipo missed two free throws with 9.5 seconds left, failing to extend Indiana's 91-90 lead.

**HAWKS 118, WIZARDS 110**

**ATLANTA (AP)** — Jeremy Lin scored 12 of his 16 points in the final period and Atlanta overcame Bradley Beal's 29 points for Washington.

Seven players scored in double figures to help the last-place Hawks (7-23) stop a three-game skid. John Collins had 20 points and 13 rebounds, while rookie Trae Young scored 19.

Lin's big fourth quarter included a dribble fake that sent Thomas Satoransky falling backward, leaving Lin open for a jumper and a 103-93 lead. Lin added a layup on Atlanta's next possession. Trevor Ariza started at forward and had 19 points in his return to the Wizards. Beal grabbed 10 rebounds. The 33-year-old Ariza was acquired from Phoenix in a trade announced Monday. □



In this Saturday, Aug. 4, 2018 file photo, Henry Cejudo, right, ducks a kick from Demetrious Johnson during their UFC flyweight title mixed martial arts bout at UFC 227 in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

## One Championship sets Mighty Mouse, Alvarez debuts for Japan

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Demetrious Johnson and Eddie Alvarez will make their One Championship debuts at the mixed martial arts promotion's first show in Japan on March 31.

One Championship on Wednesday revealed several bout matchups to The Associated Press for its landmark event in Tokyo.

The show at the Ryogoku Kokugikan arena will feature atomweight champion Angela Lee's move up to challenge One strawweight champion Xiong Jing Nan. Middleweight champion Aung La N Sang and lightweight champ Eduard Folayang also will defend their belts against Japanese challengers.

Johnson and Alvarez are two former UFC champions who moved to the Singapore-based One Championship earlier this year.

Johnson, the long-reigning UFC flyweight champion better known as "Mighty Mouse," will take on Japanese flyweight Yuya "Little Piranha" Wakamatsu in his first bout for One.

Johnson had won 13 consecutive bouts and had the longest title reign in UFC history before he surrendered his 125-pound title in a split-decision loss to Henry Cejudo in August. Johnson then moved to One Championship in October in an effective trade

between the promotions, with the UFC getting welterweight Ben Askren from One in the deal.

Alvarez, the former UFC and Bellator lightweight champion, will fight Russian lightweight contender Timofey Nastyukhin in his One debut. The well-traveled Alvarez held the UFC 155-pound title in 2016 before losing it to Conor McGregor. Alvarez is from Philadelphia, but fought in Japan several times in his early career. One has bolstered its roster with notable U.S.-based talent ahead of a North American television deal with Turner Sports beginning in January. Along with Johnson and Alvarez, the promotion also has signed Sage Northcutt, the 22-year-old Texas lightweight promoted as a major future star by the UFC.

Lee (9-0), a Canadian-born Singaporean who grew up in Hawaii, is among One Championship's most popular fighters and its 105-pound champion since mid-2016. She will move up 10 pounds to challenge Xiong (13-1) in a superfight initially planned for November before Lee had to drop out with a back injury.

Aung La N Sang, from Myanmar, will defend his belt against Japan's Ken Hasegawa in a rematch of their memorable five-round bout in June. □

## Senators bring bill to criminalize vast doping conspiracies

By **EDDIE PELLIS**  
AP National Writer

Two U.S. senators have introduced a bill that would criminalize international doping conspiracies, the likes of which Russia pursued during the Sochi Olympics in 2014.

The measure is named after Grigory Rodchenkov, the Moscow lab director who blew the whistle on Russian cheating. It is similar to a bill introduced in the House earlier this year but is given a better chance of passing in part because it focuses on large-scale corruption and eliminates language that would put individuals in jeopardy for smaller offenses.

Sponsored by Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Sheldon Whitehouse, D-Rhode Island, the bill calls for fines of up to \$1 million and prison sentences of up to 10 years for those who participate in schemes designed to influ-

ence international sports competitions through doping.

The bill is being introduced two months after the Justice Department indicted seven people for involvement in a wide-ranging Russian hacking scheme that sought out international anti-doping agencies among its targets. That scheme revealed medical records of more than 250 athletes. A U.S. attorney involved in the case said it was part of Russia's quest for revenge after some of its athletes were banned from the 2016 Olympics.

Under the bill, doping is added to the list of areas in which Russia is using sophisticated schemes to disrupt American institutions. Earlier this week, the Senate intelligence committee released reports detailing Russia's widespread political disinformation campaign on social media, designed to

help elect Donald Trump president in 2016.

"To remain a 'city on a hill,' America must hold the crooked and corrupt accountable whenever we can. That means forcefully confronting Russia's use of corruption as a tool of foreign policy," Whitehouse said.

The bill would give prosecutors some of the same tools they used to bring indictments in 2015 against a number of FIFA executives for racketeering, wire fraud and other financial crimes. U.S. Anti-Doping Agency CEO Travis Tygart called the bill part of an "overall recognition that doping is fraud, and when it's done by organizations, it's going to be put on the same level as other types of fraud. That's a really powerful statement."

The bill calls for federal agencies pursuing doping cases to consult with the



In this Dec. 6, 2017, file photo, the building of the Russian Olympic Committee is seen through a gate decorated with the Olympic rings, in Moscow, Russia.

Associated Press

USADA, which has joined a chorus of world anti-doping agencies in criticizing the World Anti-Doping Agency and the International Olympic Committee for showing leniency toward Russia in the wake of the scandal.

"I think there was unanimous agreement (among U.S. lawmakers) that the institutions that are supposed to be policing doping are not working and, in many ways, are emboldening cheaters," said Rodchenkov's attorney, Jim Walden.

"I think this is a very direct way to deter further criminal activity."

The bill specifically targets organizations that conduct doping fraud at major international competitions, such as world championships or the Olympics. While the House bill would have left open the prospect of athletes suing each other for damages, this one would give victims of the conspiracies the ability to receive restitution for money and opportunities lost. □

### CUBA, MLB

Continued from Page 17

The agreement marks a step forward in U.S.-Cuba relations during a time of tensions between Cuba and the Trump administration, which has pledged to undo President Barack Obama's 2014 opening with the island.

MLB said the deal was allowed by amendments to the Cuban Asset Control Regulations of March 16, 2016, that established the provisions of a general license from the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. The league said OFAC confirmed to Major League Baseball in a letter dated Sept. 20, 2016, that an agreement with the Cuban federation would be valid.

"Baseball has always been a bridge between our two nations, facilitating people-to-people connections and larger agreements that have brought our countries closer together," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Vermont Democrat.

Any disputes between MLB and the Cuban federation are subject to resolution by

the International Chamber of Commerce.

"Establishing a safe, legal process for entry to our system is the most important step we can take to ending the exploitation and endangerment of Cuban players who pursue careers in Major League Baseball," union head Tony Clark said in a statement. "The safety and well-being of these young men remains our primary concern."

Only players under contract to the Cuban federation are covered by the agreement, and the Cuban federation agreed to release all players 25 and older with at least six years of professional experience. They would be classified as international professionals under MLB's labor contract with the players' association and not subject to international amateur signing bonus pools.

The Cuban federation may at its discretion release younger players to sign minor league contracts with MLB organizations.

A player can decide whether he wants a registered MLBPA agent to



In this Monday, May 3, 1999 file photo, members of the Cuban baseball team carry their country's flag onto the field after a baseball game against the Baltimore Orioles at Camden Yards in Baltimore.

Associated Press

negotiate a major league contract. He may use a representative other than an agent to negotiate a minor league deal.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Flake, an Arizona Republican, called it a "homerun agreement," tweeting "This deal will make life better for Cuban baseball players, who will no longer have to risk un-

safe passage to the U.S."

Players have told stories of harrowing crossings on rafts and rickety boats — some later challenged as exaggerations.

"Today is a day that I am extremely happy," said a statement from Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Yasiel Puig, who was smuggled out of Cuba by traffickers

linked to a Mexican drug gang, according to court testimony. "To know future Cuban players will not have to go through what we went through makes me so happy."

Cuban-born players have a long history in the major leagues, led by Minnie Minoso with nine All-Star selections, Tony Oliva with eighth and Camilo Pascual and Tony Perez with seven each. And while Puig, Orlando and Livan Hernandez, Aroldis Chapman and others became stars in recent decades, others have been big-money busts. Outfielder Rusney Castillo agreed to a \$72.5 million, seven-year contract with Boston in 2014 and has appeared in just 99 games with the Red Sox while playing 347 in the minor leagues.

"Words cannot fully express my heartfelt joy," Chicago White Sox All-Star first baseman Jose Abreu said in a statement. "Dealing with the exploitation of smugglers and unscrupulous agencies will finally come to an end for the Cuban baseball player. □

# Need some milk? Driverless cars start delivering groceries

By **CATHY BUSSEWITZ**  
AP Business Writer

The nation's largest grocery chain stepped into the driverless delivery market Tuesday, bringing milk, eggs and other items to a customer's home in a vehicle with nobody at the wheel. Although limited to delivering within about a mile (1.5 kilometers) of one Arizona supermarket owned by Kroger Co., it represents the latest step for industries trying to lower delivery costs of everyday items and those trying to launch self-driving cars on public roads.

Tuesday's delivery arrived at Shannon Baggett's house in the Phoenix suburb of Scottsdale. She was already receiving groceries weekly from larger, manned self-driving vehicles that the company Nuro developed and launched in August. She said it was surreal to see nobody in the car bringing her milk, eggs and strawberries.

"It was very cool to see it pull up. It was a lot smaller



This undated image provided by The Kroger Co. shows an autonomous vehicle called the R1. Associated Press

than I thought it would be," Baggett said. "I told my husband, 'We just got our groceries delivered by a robot.'"

But Tuesday's launch also highlighted some of the many challenges still ahead for autonomous vehicles: One of the compact cars didn't drive as planned at a media demonstration because of a dead battery and had to be pushed up a ramp and onto a truck by several men.

Kroger and Nuro, which is based in Mountain View, California, announced Tuesday that they would deliver groceries in the Scottsdale area, using an autonomous vehicle called the R1, which has no steering wheel and no seats for people.

Nuro will be adding two of its completely unmanned R1 vehicles to its fleet of manned self-driving vehicles that deliver groceries, said Dave Ferguson, president and co-founder of Nuro. When summoned,

the R1 will travel within a 1-mile (1.5-kilometer) radius of the Fry's Food store just east of the Phoenix Zoo at speeds up to 25 miles per hour (40 kph) on residential roads but stay clear of main roads or highways, according to Pam Giannonatti, corporate affairs manager at Cincinnati-based Kroger's Fry's division.

Customers place an order on their smartphone or laptop and get a text message when the groceries are on their way. Another message will alert them when the delivery is curbside. Once the vehicle arrives, the customer will receive a code to punch in to open the doors, Giannonatti said. Customers will pay a flat fee of \$5.95 and can request same-day or next-day delivery. The unmanned delivery vehicles will be followed by a "shadow car," driven by a person with the ability to stop or control it. This car is being used in the early stages of the program out of caution and will be

phased out, Ferguson said. "This is not yet at the point where in any way it's economically better than just sending someone out in a car to deliver your groceries," said Bryant Walker Smith, a professor at the University of South Carolina, who teaches about emerging technologies. "It will probably cost much more, and the range is minimal, and there are lots of ways it would not be a true, commercial-scale, viable deployment, but it's an important step on that path." Technological hurdles and apprehension have limited attempts to deploy fully autonomous vehicles on public streets.

Uber pulled its self-driving cars out of Arizona this year after one of the ride-hailing service's robotic vehicles hit and killed a woman as she crossed a darkened street in a Phoenix suburb in March. It was the first death involving a fully autonomous vehicle. A backup driver was at the wheel.

Waymo, a self-driving car spinoff from a Google project, has been offering free rides in robotic vehicles with no backup driver as part of a test program in the Phoenix area for the past year. Earlier this month, Waymo launched a ride-hailing service available to about 200 people that will have a person behind the wheel in case something goes awry. Giannonatti of Kroger said safety is paramount in this next step of autonomous vehicle technology.

Because Nuro's R1 delivery vehicle is unmanned, it was designed to prioritize safety of other drivers and pedestrians without trading off the safety or comfort of a driver or passengers, Ferguson said. The vehicle's size — half the width of a Toyota Corolla — also helps prevent collisions with pedestrians because there's more buffer room, he said. Kroger has been working to boost online sales to keep up with Walmart and Amazon, which bought grocer Whole Foods last year.

Tuesday's announcement puts Kroger ahead of Walmart and Amazon in self-driving deliveries, says Jon Reily, vice president of commerce strategy at Publicis.Sapient.

"But ultimately," he says, "there are so many challenges with autonomous vehicles" to make it a reality nationwide.

Among them: state laws and weather. Arizona's laws have been friendlier to self-driving vehicles, and the weather in Scottsdale is more predictable than in other parts of the country. □



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## D.C. sues Facebook over Cambridge Analytica privacy scandal

By **MICHAEL BALSAMO**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The District of Columbia sued Facebook on Wednesday for allowing data-mining firm Cambridge Analytica to improperly access data from as many as 87 million users.

D.C. Attorney General Karl Racine's suit alleges that

Facebook misled users about the security of their data and failed to properly monitor third-party apps. In 2013, a researcher launched a Facebook app, promoted as a personality quiz, which claimed to generate a personality profile. The app also collected the personal information

of users' Facebook friends and the information was eventually sold to Cambridge Analytica, a political consulting firm. After the revelations about Cambridge Analytica, congressional hearings were held and Facebook changed what sorts of data it lets outside devel-

opers access.

"We're seeking to hold Facebook accountable for jeopardizing and exposing the personal information of tens of millions of its users," Racine said on a conference call with reporters. "We hope this lawsuit will ensure Facebook takes better care with its data." □





 \$ 265,000.00 Bubali # 113c 3Bedr w/ additional guest studio	 \$ 355,000.00 Caya Ritmo # 35 4 Bedr 2 Story Home Eagle Beach area	 \$ 575,000.00 Oceania # 213 2Bed/2Bath ocean front Condo.	 \$ 650,000.00 Tamarijn \$ 59 4Bedr home w/ sweeping island views	<p><i>For information on one of our featured homes for the holidays please contact us at</i></p> <p><i>(297) 733- 4663- phone</i> <i>info@arubahomeminders.com- email</i> <i>www.arubahomeminders.com- web site</i></p>
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## US stocks rise before Federal Reserve meeting; oil rebounds

By MARLEY JAY

**NEW YORK (AP)** — U.S. stocks are climbing Wednesday morning as a modest recovery in oil prices pulls energy companies slightly higher following huge losses a day earlier. Markets were relatively quiet as the Federal Reserve wraps up its last meeting of the year. Investors expect the Fed to raise interest rates again, and are looking for details about its plans for 2019 amid signs the global economy is slowing down.

**KEEPING SCORE:** The S&P 500 index rose 16 points, or 0.7 percent, to 2,562 as of 10 a.m. Eastern time. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 131 points, or 0.6 percent, to 23,806. The Nasdaq composite gained 57 points, or 0.9 percent, to 6,841. The Russell 2000 index, made up of smaller-company stocks, picked up 8 points, or 0.6 percent, to 1,385.

**FED FOCUS:** The Fed will likely raise its short-term interest rate another quarter-point, to a range of 2.25 percent to 2.5 percent. The central bank has forecast three more hikes in 2019, but with investors worried about slowing economic growth and the financial markets slumping, experts expect the Fed to predict a slower path of increases next year. For stock markets, battered recently by a series of concerns related to mounting trade tensions between the



Stock traders work at the New York Stock Exchange, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018.

Associated Press

U.S. and China, that could be cause for optimism. The Fed's rates help set lending rates around the U.S., and higher rates tend to slow down economic growth because they make it more expensive for businesses and consumers to borrow money. The Fed's actions are part of a trend around the world, as other major central banks are either reducing their economic stimulus plans or raising rates. The global economy is already forecast to slow down in 2019 and investors are getting nervous rising rates will make it worse.

**MEDICINE CABINET MERGER:** Drugmakers GlaxoS-

mithKline and Pfizer said they will combine their consumer product businesses, bringing Pfizer's Advil pain medicine and Centrum supplements together with Glaxo's Sensodyne toothpaste. The companies said its combined sales will be more than \$12 billion. GlaxoSmithKline of Britain will own two-thirds of the combined company. Its stock jumped 3.8 percent to \$38.49 while Pfizer slipped 0.4 percent to \$42.22.

**LOST IN THE MAIL:** FedEx said international shipping, especially in Europe, fell in its latest quarter, while the U.S.-China trade dispute is also affecting its business. The shipping company

posted a smaller profit than analysts expected and said it will cut spending and offer buyouts to some workers to help make up for the shaky results.

"The peak for global economic growth now appears to be behind us,"

Chief Marketing Officer Rajesh Subramanian said in a conference call with investors. FedEx stock lost 9.2 percent to \$168.03 and rival UPS skidded 1.3 percent to \$96.04. FedEx has tumbled by about 33 percent this year, and UPS is down 19 percent.

**ENERGY:** Oil prices bounced back slightly after plunging on worries about rising supplies and weakening global growth, which could weigh on demand. Benchmark U.S. crude climbed 1.9 percent to \$47.12 a barrel in New York. It dropped 7 percent Tuesday and closed at a 16-month low, and has fallen almost 40 percent since Oct. 3. Brent crude, used to price international oils, was up 1.3 percent to \$56.97 a barrel in London.

**EUROPE:** European stocks rose after Italy's government reached an agreement with the European Commission on its budget plans. That avoids a legal dispute over the government's plan to ramp up spending. □



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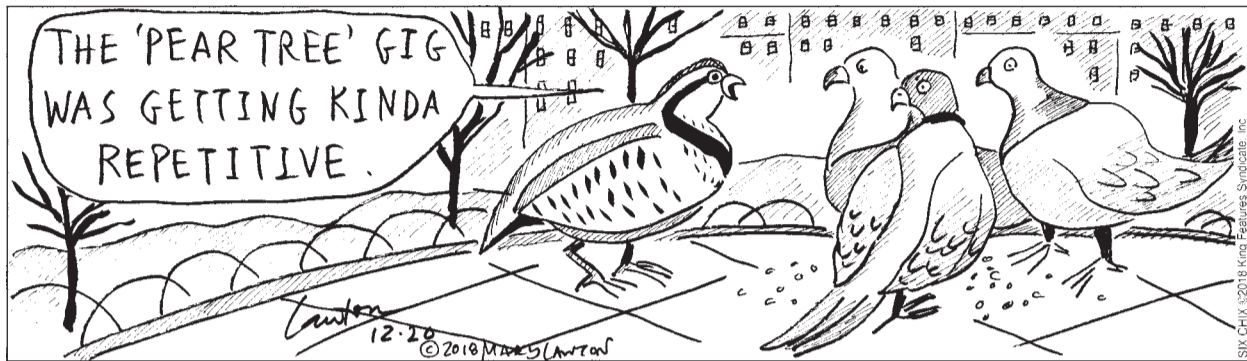
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Bubali 143, in front of SuperFood Plaza Mall

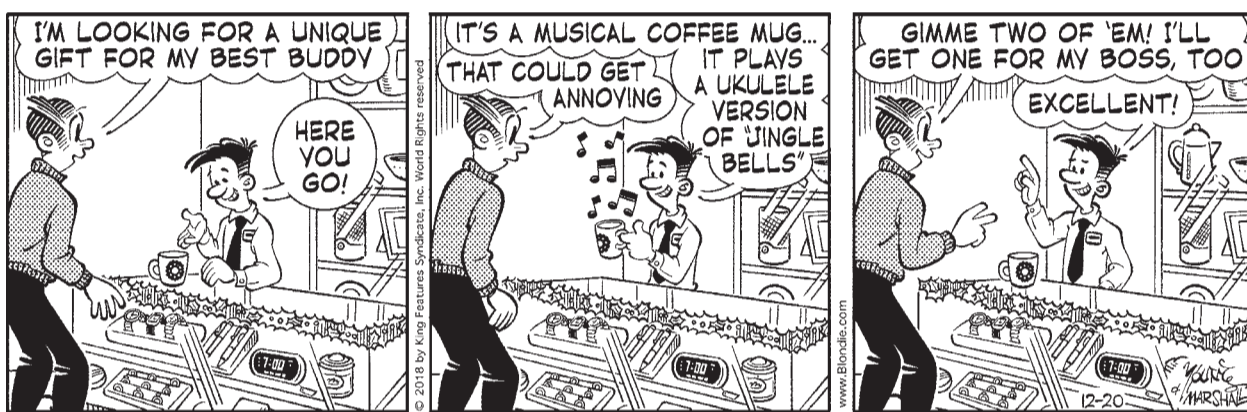
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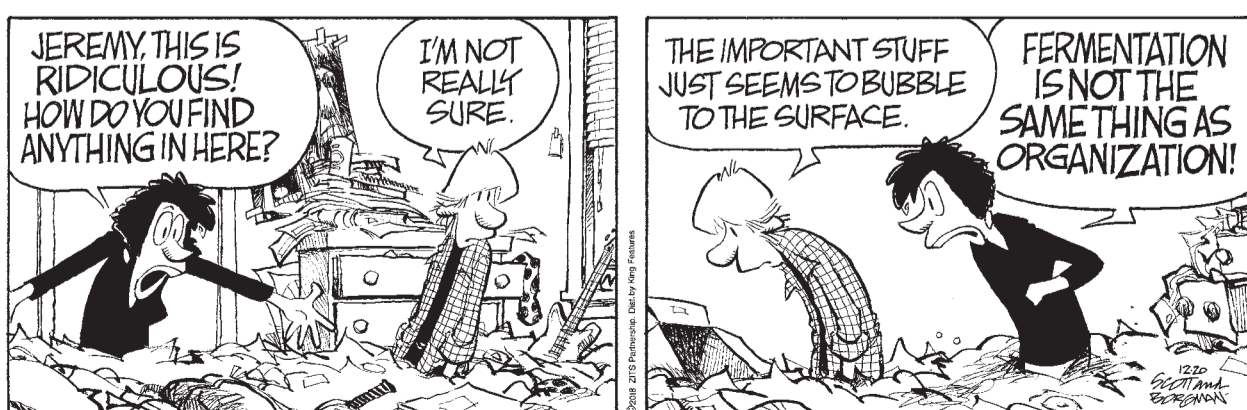
**Mother Goose & Grimm**



**Baby Blues**



**Zits**



**Conceptis Sudoku**

1	3	6	4	8				
		2	3					
8								5
6	4						5	
3								9
	7						3	1
5								6
		1	4					
		2	3	6	7			8

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/20

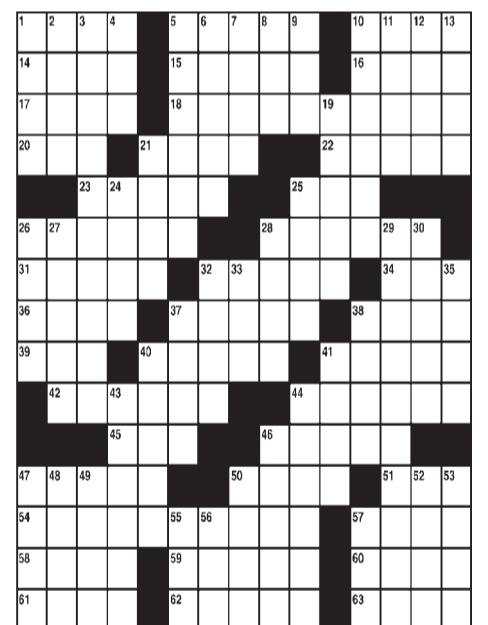
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

7	1	5	6	8	3	4	2	9
8	2	4	9	1	5	7	6	3
6	9	3	2	7	4	8	1	5
1	8	2	5	4	6	3	9	7
3	7	9	1	2	8	5	4	6
4	5	6	7	3	9	1	8	2
5	3	8	4	9	2	6	7	1
2	6	1	8	5	7	9	3	4
9	4	7	3	6	1	2	5	8

**ACROSS**

- 1 Story
- 5 Gift for the teacher
- 10 USC's crosstown rival
- 14 Not up yet
- 15 Courtroom event
- 16 Mealtime
- 17 Chicken pieces
- 18 Shirt that was your brother's
- 20 TV crime drama series
- 21 Penny
- 22 Water barriers
- 23 Unpopular animal
- 25 Presidential initials
- 26 Divides
- 28 Sounds
- 31 Furious
- 32 Info on a sales tag
- 34 Took a load off
- 36 Short letter
- 37 Slight pin poke
- 38 Agile
- 39 Sticky stuff
- 40 Skier's incline
- 41 Inexpensive
- 42 Noisy quarrel
- 44 Crude
- 45 Little guy
- 46 -frutti
- 47 Chocolate source
- 50 Greek letters
- 51 Laundry soap
- 54 Single, and dating no one
- 57 Unhappy
- 58 Humerus or scapula
- 59 Sound of a grandfather clock
- 60 Wapitis
- 61 Lumberjack tools
- 62 Mah-jongg pieces
- 63 Watches



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/20/18

**DOWN**

- 1 Powder
- 2 Lincoln & Vigoda
- 3 Lawmaker
- 4 Sullivan and Bradley
- 5 Largest city in Greece
- 6 Practical joke
- 7 Half-quart
- 8 Youth
- 9 Common street name
- 10 Shorts
- 11 Chef
- 12 Actor Rob
- 13 Curry & others
- 19 Albert, for one
- 21 \_\_\_ as a button
- 24 Windy day toy
- 25 Wooden pier
- 26 Warble
- 27 "Smoking gun"
- 28 Pleasant
- 29 In particular
- 30 Alaska's Palin
- 32 Experts
- 33 Tear
- 35 Do a secretary's job
- 37 Drama
- 38 Close
- 40 Move over a bit
- 41 Persians & others
- 43 Lessens
- 44 Directs
- 46 \_\_\_ song; movie opener
- 47 Havana's land
- 48 Strong as \_\_\_
- 49 Candy \_\_\_; stocking stuffer
- 50 Donahue or Collins
- 52 Gospel writer
- 53 "The \_\_\_ said, the better"
- 55 \_\_\_ up; misbehave
- 56 Tai \_\_\_; meditative exercise
- 57 Quilters' gathering

**Wednesday's Puzzle Solved**

A	S	I	R	E	P	E	L	A	J	A	R
L	E	T	S	E	X	I	L	E	L	O	B
L	A	C	E	P	U	N	K	S	B	E	L
S	H	A	M	E	L	E	S	S	E	E	S
S	E	A	T					E	A	R	
U	T	M	O	S	T	M	A	N	I	T	O
P	E	O	N	S	B	A	L	E	D	P	A
P	R	O	S	P	A	R	E	D	F	I	R
E	S	S	F	R	E	E	S	C	A	N	O
R	E	E	N	T	E	R	S	P	A	T	E
	E	D	S					M	U	S	H
C	H	O	W	S	U	P	E	R	S	E	D
Z	O	N	E		U	N	I	T	E	R	S
A	P	E	S		R	I	L	E	S	S	A
R	E	S	T		E	V	E	R	T	R	Y

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king bed 4/27/19  
24 weeks left \$3500 BO  
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Building C 17 weeks remain \$6500

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# Elon Musk's new tunnel 'a little rough around the edges'

By AMANDA LEE MYERS

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Elon Musk unveiled his underground transportation tunnel on Tuesday, allowing reporters and invited guests to take some of the first rides in the revolutionary albeit bumpy subterranean tube — the tech entrepreneur's answer to what he calls "soul-destroying traffic."

Guests boarded Musk's Tesla Model X and rode along Los Angeles-area surface streets about a mile (1.6 kilometers) away to what's known as O'Leary Station. The station, smack dab in the middle of a residential neighborhood — "basically in someone's backyard," Musk says — consists of a wall-less elevator that slowly took the car down a wide shaft, roughly 30 feet (9 meters) below the surface.

The sky slowly fell away and the surprisingly narrow tunnel emerged.

"We're clear," said the driver, who sped up and zipped into the tunnel when a red track light turned green, making the tube look like something from space or a dance club.

The car jostled significantly during the ride, which was bumpy enough to give one reporter motion sickness while another yelled, "Woo!"

Musk described his first ride as "epic."

"For me it was a eureka moment," he told a room full of reporters. "I was like, 'This thing is going to damn well work.'"

He said the rides are bumpy now because "we kind of ran out of time" and there were some problems with the speed of his paving machine.

"It'll be smooth as glass," he said of future systems. "This is just a prototype. That's



Elon Musk, co-founder and chief executive officer of Tesla Inc., arrives in a modified Tesla Model X electric vehicle during an unveiling event for the Boring Company Hawthorne test tunnel in Hawthorne, Calif., on Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2018.

Associated Press

why it's a little rough around the edges."

Later in the day, Musk emerged from the tunnel himself inside one of his cars. He high-fived guests and pumped his fists in the air before delivering a speech in the green glow of the tunnel about the technology and why it makes sense.

The demo rides were considerably slower — 40 mph (64 kph) — than what Musk says the future system will run at: 150 mph (241 kph). Still, it took only three minutes to go just over a mile from the beginning to the end of the tunnel, the same amount of time it took to accomplish a right-hand turn out of the parking lot and onto a surface street even before the height of Los Angeles' notorious rush-hour traffic.

The tunnel is just a test to prove the technology works and could one day cure traffic.

Tuesday's reveal comes al-

most two years to the day since Musk announced on Twitter that "traffic is driving me nuts" and he was "going to build a tunnel boring machine and just start digging."

"I am actually going to do this," he added in response to initial skepticism. Soon after, he began The Boring Company, tongue in cheek intentional.

Since then, Musk has only revealed a handful of photos and videos of the tunnel's progress.

On Tuesday, he explained for the first time in detail just how the system, which he simply calls "loop," could work on a larger scale beneath cities across the globe. Autonomous, electric vehicles could be lowered into the system on wall-less elevators the size of two cars or spiral ramps. The elevators could be placed almost anywhere cars can go.

A number of autonomous cars would remain inside the tunnel system just for pedestrians and bicyclists. Once on the main arteries of the system, every car could run at top speed except when entering and exiting.

"It's much more like an underground highway than it is a subway," Musk said.

Cars would have to be fitted with specially designed

side wheels that pop out perpendicular to the car's regular tires and run along the tunnel's track. They would run about \$200 or \$300 a car, Musk said.

The cars would have to be autonomous to work in the system but not Teslas specifically, and they would have to be electric because of the fumes from gas, Musk said.

He said tunnels are the safest place to be in earthquakes — sort of how a submarine during a hurricane is safest beneath the surface — and addressed other concerns such as the noise and disruption of building the tunnels, which he completely dismissed. When workers bored through the end of the test tunnel, for instance, the people in the home 20 feet (6 meters) away "didn't even stop watching TV."

Musk said it took about \$10 million to build the test tunnel, a far cry from the \$1 billion per mile his company says most tunnels take to build.

Musk has cut costs by improving the speed of construction with smarter tools, eliminating middlemen, building more powerful boring machines, and instead of hauling out all the dirt being excavated, Musk is turning them into bricks and selling them for

10 cents.

"I really think this is incredibly profound," he said. "Hopefully that is coming across." He reiterated the simplicity of all his ideas.

"No Nobel Prize is needed here," he said. "It's very simple."

And he's not doing it for the money, he said, adding that it's for the greater good. In his 16 years in Los Angeles, he said, traffic went from "the seventh level of hell to the eighth level of hell."

"Traffic is soul-destroying. It's like acid on the soul," he said to party guests who snacked on marshmallow treats and hot dogs and hoped for a turn in the tunnel.

The tunnel will not be open to the public for the foreseeable future, just for invited VIPs, Musk said, adding that regulations wouldn't allow for it to open widely for demo rides just yet.

Steve Davis, head of The Boring Company, said the interest in the tunnel systems has been significant — anywhere from five to 20 calls a week from various municipalities and stakeholders.

One project Musk is planning on, known as the Dug-out Loop, would take Los Angeles baseball fans to Dodger Stadium from one of three subway stations. Another would take travelers from downtown Chicago to O'Hare International Airport. Both projects are in the environmental review phase. Musk said he thinks the Chicago project has the most potential to open soonest and that he's hoping an extensive network opens in Los Angeles before the city hosts the 2028 Olympics. "Wouldn't it be incredible if you could travel around LA, New York, D.C., Chicago, Paris, London — anywhere — at 150 mph?" Musk said. "That'd be phenomenal." The Boring Company canceled its plans for another test tunnel on Los Angeles' west side last month after a neighborhood coalition filed a lawsuit expressing concerns about increased traffic during construction. □

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## With 'Bumblebee,' John Cena finds his stride in Hollywood

LOS ANGELES (AP) — John Cena doesn't believe in ego. How could he when he's used to tens of thousands of WWE fans chanting "John Cena sucks" every time he walks out to the ring?

It's a philosophy that's helped him survive both the demands of professional wrestling, where he was never supposed to be a success, and now Hollywood, where he's made a miraculous comeback from some terrible films in the earlier 2000s. In the past three years, Cena has become a reliable highlight of whatever project he's in, whether as a boyfriend who bares it all in "Trainwreck," as an overprotective father to a teenager in this year's "Blockers," or even as a military man with some great one-liners in a big budget Transformers movie like "Bumblebee," which hits theaters Friday.

"I'm not afraid to fall on my face, I'm not afraid to look ridiculous," Cena said on a recent afternoon in Los Angeles. "My ego lies with the moviegoer...I want to entertain folks. I want to make people happy."

And Cena is finally achieving that goal in films after a rocky start. Up until a few years ago, Cena's Rotten Tomatoes scores for forgettable and generically-titled action pics like "12 Rounds," "The Marine" and "Legendary" barely broke 30 percent. But ever the athlete, he didn't crumble under



This Dec. 9, 2018 photo shows WWE star-turned-actor John Cena posing for a portrait at the Four Seasons Hotel to promote his film "Bumblebee" in Los Angeles.

the weight of negative reviews, he learned from it.

"My heart wasn't in them. I wanted to be somewhere else. I did those movies because it was good for a business model," Cena said. "What I learned from that is do what you love."

And he got his chance with the 2015 Amy Schumer relationship comedy "Trainwreck," which, following a divorce, he found he "totally related to." That breakout role as the sort-of boyfriend of Schumer's character put him on the map as not only novelty casting, but a veritable talent as well, leading to roles in "Sisters," "Daddy's Home 2" and "Blockers."

And now there's "Bumblebee," his biggest and, at 97 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, highest-rated movie yet.

Cena wasn't looking for a franchise, or an action film to do when the script for "Bumblebee" came across his desk. He didn't even care much about Transformers. But then he read it and found a sweet story about a misfit teenage girl (played by Hailee Steinfeld) and a robot that was more E.T. than Michael Bay, and decided it was something he wanted to do.

"I was like 'I'll be Bumblebee's spare tire, I don't even care,'" Cena said. "I

wanted to do something in the movie."

He and director Travis Knight settled on Agent Burns, who might have the dressings of a cartoon villain, but also has some surprises, and humor up his sleeve. Steinfeld marveled at how prepared Cena was every day and his "infectious energy."

In all of his films, Cena considers himself at the service of the story and the director.

"I became successful in WWE by always learning and evolving. I believe that the people around me are smarter than me," he said. "Same thing in movies. I

never watch playback. I never give feedback. I take feedback."

It's something of a director's dream to have someone so open to constructive criticism.

"I love him. He is so coachable. He would do anything I asked him. And I'm saying anything," said "Blockers" director Kay Cannon. "If there was a time where he felt like he didn't give what I wanted, he would text or call or check-in and apologize, like, 'I'm so sorry, I'll do better next time.' He's very much an athlete."

His biggest learning curve in films thus far has been adapting to performing without an immediate audience of thousands in front of him.

"I just started telling directors, 'Hey don't be afraid to tell me to turn it down. You're going to have to do that because of the world I come from,'" he said. "Tell me I suck and tell me what you need."

It's not uncommon, he said, for a director to come from behind the monitor and say, "You're at a 10, I need you to be at a 1."

"I'm humble and vulnerable enough to say I'm still learning," Cena said.

One person he's learned a lot from is Jackie Chan, who he is co-starring with in a 2019 action film from Scott Waugh.

"I firmly believe he's a robot because he does not know the word stop," Cena said. □

Associated Press

## Poetry readers were in the mood for 'Kindness' in 2018

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Poetry readers this year have been in the mood for kindness.

The Academy of American Poets announced Wednesday that Naomi Shihab Nye's "Kindness" was the most popular work on poets.org this year.

More than 250,000 people in 2018 clicked on the poem, which features such lines as "It is only kindness that makes sense anymore, only kindness that ties your

shoes."

The 66-year-old Nye said in a statement that she was inspired to write the poem after she was robbed on a bus in Colombia and a man she remembered as an "Indian in a white poncho" was murdered.

She praised a passing stranger who asked what happened and was thankful to have her pencil and notebook, and to be alive. Nye's books include "Transfer" and "Red Suitcase." □



In this Nov. 18, 2011, file photo, poet Naomi Nye speaks with students at Episcopal High School in Baton Rouge, La., reading from some of her published pieces.

Associated Press

# 'If Beale Street Could Talk' is lyrical and lovely

By LINDSEY BAHR

"Every black person born in America was born on Beale Street...whether in Jackson, Mississippi, or in Harlem, New York," reads the title card that begins director Barry Jenkins' "If Beale Street Could Talk."

The quote is from a 1974 James Baldwin novel, which Jenkins has adapted himself for his first film since 2016's "Moonlight." The story is, loosely, about a pregnant woman, Tish (KIKI Layne, a phenomenal breakout) and her partner Fonny (Stephan James), who has been wrongly jailed for a crime he didn't commit. Tish and Fonny are both achingly young and beautiful, full of promise and hope even amid all the institutional obstacles and injustices that they face in daily life in 1970s Harlem, like not being able to rent their own apartment, or buy groceries at the local mart without being reassessed by a police officer. Their future, however, is dashed when Fonny is jailed because a woman across town has wrongly



This image released by Annapurna Pictures shows Teyonah Parris in a scene from "If Beale Street Could Talk."

Associated Press

identified him as her rapist. Tish has to tell Fonny she's pregnant through a glass window. Somehow, at least at first, the circumstances aren't enough to break their spirits, although there is the sense that both are just putting on a brave face for the other. Back at home, Tish's family celebrates their daughter.

ter. Mom, Sharon (Regina King in a powerful performance), sister, Ernestine (Teyonah Parris) and dad, Joseph (Colman Domingo), open up the sherry, put on a record and call

Fonny's family over to continue spreading the news. There are three wholly unforgettable scenes in "If Beale Street Could Talk," and the electric showdown between Fonny's religious

and snobbish mother (Aunjanue Ellis) and Tish's family is one of them. Another is a stirring haunting monologue from Brian Tyree Henry, which unfortunately is really his only significant scene in the film, and the third is Sharon's heartbreaking talk with Fonny's accuser. All are well-worth the price of admission. Not everything works totally, in between these barnburners there is a lot of sleepy down time (still gorgeously shot and scored) and a few moments that just don't quite work the way they probably should, like Dave Franco as an empathetic Jewish landlord who just loves love.

The film plays more like a free verse poem than a traditional narrative, jumping back and forth between moments chronicling the origins of Tish and Fonny's relationship, and Tish's struggle to prove Fonny's innocence in the present. □

## Sandra Bullock's Oscars host solution: Call on random actors



Sandra Bullock attends a screening of "Bird Box" at Alice Tully Hall on Monday, Dec. 17, 2018, in New York.

Associated Press

By JOHN CARUCCI

Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Sandra Bullock has an impromptu idea for how to solve the Oscars host problem, and it involves a lot of improvisation. The Oscar-winning actress told The Associated Press Monday at a screening of her new film "Bird Box" that she thinks random actors should be pulled out

of the audience and read what's on the teleprompter to cover a segment of the show. Organizers "don't even have to tell them it's happening, just put up the teleprompter, and go, 'it's your turn,'" Bullock said. "You're an actor, figure it out." Bullock says it's a genius solution that everyone in the room is perfectly suited to handle. Well, almost ev-

everyone — Bullock says she's not attending next year's ceremony, but would participate in her idea if she was.

No host for February's Academy Awards has been announced since Kevin Hart backed out of emcee duties earlier this month over backlash to his old homophobic tweets. Bullock's idea relied on a bit of improvisation. She told the AP, "I just pulled that out of my butt. It's amazing." By the end of the red carpet for "Bird Box," it already had the support of some of Bullock's co-stars. "I don't think we need a host anymore, man. I really believe it should be a show that we just do," Lil Rel Howery said. "Maybe if you can get celebrities to do some really funny sketches instead of one person. Something fun." Actor BD Wong said if anyone can pull off Bullock's idea, it's her. □

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	<b>SECOND ACT</b> JENNIFER LOPEZ   MILO VENTIMIGLIA MON-THU 4:20   7:10   9:30 FRI 4:20   7:10   9:30   11:50 SAT 2:30   4:20   7:10   9:30   11:50 SUN 2:30   4:20   7:10   9:30
	<b>AQUAMAN</b> JASON MOMOA   AMBER HEARD WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES MON-THU & SUN 4:55   7:50 FRI-SAT 4:55   7:50   10:45 CXC MON-SUN 3:45   9:05
	<b>RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET</b> JOHN C. REILLY   SARAH SILVERMAN WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES MON-FRI 5:05 SAT-SUN 2:40   5:05
	<b>SPIDER-MAN</b> JAKE JOHNSON   HAILEE STEINFELD WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES MON-FRI 4:10 SAT-SUN 1:40   4:10
	<b>COCO</b> OZUNA   CLARISA MOLINA SPANISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES MON-THU & SUN 7:30   9:35 FRI-SAT 7:30   9:35   11:40
	<b>CREED 2</b> MICHAEL B. JORDAN   SYLVESTER STALLONE WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES MON-SUN 6:40   9:20
	<b>THE GRINCH</b> BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH   CAMERON SEELY WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES SAT-SUN 1:00   3:55

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## Pusha T on winning in 2018, Grammy nom, Drake and Kanye West

By MESFIN FEKADU

Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Pusha T has been on a winning streak.

In a year where rap easily dominated as music's top genre, Pusha T's 21-minute, seven-track "Daytona" album moved the needle and became one of the most successful hip-hop projects of the year, he won his rap beef with Drake and he earned a Grammy nomination for best rap album.

As the rap star reflects on the year, he says: "I really can look back at 2018 and really look at it as a total win."

"I didn't start 'Daytona' to let anybody down and I feel like we definitely accomplished the mission," he added. "'Daytona' is rap album of the year. No one rapped better than me in 2018."

Pusha T, 41, has been making bold statements like those since he emerged on the music scene as one-half of the duo Clipse two decades ago, earning praise for his raw lyrical content and delivery.

He reached new heights this year when he exposed Drake on "The Story of Adidon" (Drake never responded to the burning diss track). The Kanye West-produced "Daytona" soon followed, debuting at No. 3 on the pop charts and landing on several critics' year-end lists.

The album earned a Grammy nomination for best rap album in a highly competitive year, pitting Pusha T against Cardi B, Travis Scott, Nipsey Hussle and the late Mac Miller, and garnering a nod over acts like Drake, Lil Wayne, Eminem, J. Cole, Nas, Migos, DJ Khaled, Nicki Minaj and even West. Pusha T said when the Recording Academy added a nomination review committee to the rap category last year to serve as an additional layer of checks and balances, he felt like he had a stronger chance of getting a nomination.

"Maybe not never in my life had I ever thought about getting a Grammy, but I



In this Jan. 27, 2018 file photo, Pusha T attends the Roc Nation pre-Grammy brunch in New York. Associated Press

remember hearing about it and saying, 'Damn, man, that's pretty dope. I can't wait to see how that turns out,'" he said. "I was really impressed with the effort of the Grammy committee and how they were trying to change the way of doing things. Now when I look at the nominees, man, we got a tough category, and all of those albums are albums that I rock with."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Pusha T discusses his Grammy nomination, Drake's omission from the best rap category, West's recent tweets and more.

AP: What does it feel like to see "Daytona" up for best rap album?

Pusha T: Man, for me the Grammy nomination is just the icing on the cake. ...I remember, like, being young, super-young and looking at the Grammys, I used to never see my favorite rappers up there... As I got older, and my favorite rappers were being nomi-

nated, they went through a whole boycott period. I remember rappers boycotting the Grammys. Then, ultimately, time moves on and I got to see some great ones — Jay-Z, Kanye West — receive a Grammy. To be nominated for what it is that I do, and what I've done — I've been very consistent for what I've done in the rap game — it's amazing. I don't know if there's ever been any rapper who has embodied the streets so much and with this level of content and this level of pure artistry (that's been nominated for a Grammy). I don't know. This is really just the streets talking right here.

AP: Was it surprising to get a nomination because the album is shorter than most? Pusha T: Sometimes you have to change the silhouette. I feel like that's what we did, we changed the silhouette. And I guess seven tracks isn't... time-wise, it does say it's eligible. I don't think anybody left feeling

unfulfilled. As I look at all these top 100 lists, top 50 lists, like, "Damn, 'Daytona' is always in the top 3, top 5, 1, here and there." I feel like everybody was fulfilled.

AP: What were some of your other favorite rap albums that were not nominated?

Pusha T: I actually liked Jay Rock's album a lot. I probably was on record with that one, too. He's probably one of the ones that I felt like really put together a really strong project, rap-wise.

AP: Were you surprised that none of the other Kanye West-produced projects were nominated?

Pusha T: I felt like Kanye getting a producer of the year Grammy nomination is due in part to his output and how he had to turn into a chameleon to do all these albums. I definitely felt like Teyana (Taylor)'s album was super-strong and could have definitely deserved a Grammy.

In being fair, I do feel like

my album was the most dialed-in, and just laser-direct for a category. I feel like my album really hit the rap category directly. If you look at the (Kid) Cudi project, Cudi and 'Ye project "Kids See Ghost," or the 'Ye (solo) project, I don't know exactly. I think those two projects could have danced in a few different categories.

AP: Were you surprised to not see Drake's album in best rap album?

Pusha T: No. I wasn't surprised. I think everybody needs to stay in their respective category. I don't think me and him are in the same category.

AP: When you released "The Story of Adidon," were you afraid that it would overshadow the "Daytona" album?

Pusha T: That was a concern during that whole time. That was a concern. I always felt that I had rap album of the year. I always knew it. That was a bit of distraction in regards to me being able to campaign that from the day that I put out the album up until something like the Grammys. That was a bit of a distraction. We were sort of strategic about that. Very strategic on how we discussed it and what we talked about, because that wasn't part of the album. That was extra credit.

AP: Have you been working on new music?

Pusha T: Yeah, for sure.

AP: How's that going?

Pusha T: We'll see in 2019.

AP: Are you working with Kanye again?

Pusha T: For sure.

AP: Have you talked to him since he sent those tweets last week, reigniting his feud with Drake?

Pusha T: Yeah, I talked to him.

AP: Is everything cool?

Pusha T: Everything's beautiful.

AP: When he said Drake bought the first two rows of your concert — was that true?

Pusha T: Certain things I'm just not going to speak on because that's not part of my DNA. But, hey, Kanye's fine, man. He's fine. He was just talking on Twitter, doing what he does. □

# Ta-ta 2018, keep your chicken coops and, yes, the Floss

By **LEANNE ITALIE**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Keep your backyard chicken coops, dear 2018, and your vampire facials, too. And the stiff-arm Floss dance? Stomp it out in the new year.

Among other things we're over as we slide into 2019: Bell sleeves that need constant policing, the cash-cow otherwise known as subscription box services and Alec Baldwin's "Saturday Night Live" Donald Trump, because isn't the real one enough?

Here's what we'd like to leave behind come Jan. 1. You're welcome.

## **FLOSS NO MORE**

The arm-flailing, hip-swaying, rapid-fire dance craze is the new Dab and we owe it to 16-year-old social media dude Russell Horning, aka The Backpack Kid. Horning grew a sizable Instagram following through his dance moves as far back as 2014, and Rihanna reposted a photo of him well before Katy Perry invited him to do his thing with her on "Saturday Night Live" in 2017, launching him to social media superstardom.

Other celebs, moms, dads, athletes and pretty much all of YouTube are flossing their lives away. So are all the little kids in your households, once they outgrow "Baby Shark," that is.

"Fortnite" added a Floss Battle Royale victory emote. The fistful, stiff-armed dance that involves rotating arms from the front to back over and over again isn't as easy as it looks for some, so it has sprouted instructional videos. It also won Horning a 2018 Shorty Award.

Aren't all you Flossers exhausted? Have a seat. Take a load off. Go cheek-to-cheek with someone. Anything but another year of your back-and-forthness.

## **GENDER REVEAL PARTIES**

Firstly, gender is not solely boy or girl. Gender can be fluid. Gender is a spectrum. A child may have a non-binary gender identity, meaning they don't identify strictly as boy or girl. They may identify as both,



In this Nov. 14, 2018 file photo, Mason Ramsey, left, floss dances as hosts Brad Paisley, center, and Carrie Underwood look on at the 52nd annual CMA Awards at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tenn.

Associated Press

neither or another gender entirely.

Secondly, have we not outgrown blue for boys and pink for girls? Thirdly, how about a surprise? How about keeping all of this to yourselves?

Gender reveal events, such as the one recently that sparked a massive fire in Arizona, have grown into an industry, with party supplies on sale and DIY tips all over the place.

Celebrate the birth of a human being instead. Oh

wait, that's what baby showers are for, and birthdays.

## **BIG OL' SLEEVES**

Runways are full of bell sleeves, and stores, too. But what about the marinara sauce? Nobody needs to police their sleeves quite this much, especially when they're eating or doing something equally bottom-of-the-sleeve skimming.

Bell sleeves were once oh-so-boho but have popped up on all manner of tops and dresses. How hard do

you want to work to stuff those things into a jacket or coat? How big the bells have become. How utterly same-same we all look in our flared sleeves.

And tiered bell sleeves? And those flares that fall at the elbow or way high off the wrist? Prairie-wear and swingy sleeves, take a breather.

## **YOUR CHICKEN FRIENDS**

Organic eggs, pest control, fertilizer! Those are some of the apparent joys of keeping backyard chickens. The

idea is they roam around your Brooklyn patio, patch of grass or suburban wood, finding their way home at night. Or something. Some are confined to enclosed runs. And what happens when hipsters can't cope? According to news reports, the feathered puffs with legs get dumped at animal shelters, sanctuaries or worse, gobbled by some predator. Just go to a store and do your tick checks, sweet faux farmers. It's been years now. How many eggs is too many eggs?

## **KETO DESSERTS**

Ketogenics, and ketosis, and the ketogenic diet have been around forever. But the masses got all whipped up in 2018.

Here's how it goes: A high-fat, adequate-protein, low-carb approach to eating may be good for difficult-to-control epilepsy in children, and for weight loss and general health in all. The idea is for you to get more calories from protein and fat and fewer from carbs, in part by cutting back on carbs that are easy to digest.

And that, my friends, includes sugar. And THAT means so many desserts. Of course, eat what you want. Celebrate your health, but do the rest of us need to go without when we, say, come over for dinner?

"My sister's cheesecake was basically a fatberg," notes one unsatisfied enlistee.

## **BOX UP YOUR BOXES**

In beauty and fitness, food prep, apparel and toys, all your dreams can come true in a box for a fee.

Subscription boxes have been around for a while but in 2018 there were so many they needed to be curated and heavily reviewed by media and consumers alike.

So many copycats. Such a big grab for the cash.

While it's truly nice and way convenient sometimes to receive a curated box of stuff in the mail, especially at dinnertime, do remember that you're the one who's paying, unless you got lucky and your boxes are gifts that keep on giving. □



This Dec. 17, 2018 image released by Leon Drouin-Keith shows chickens roaming around a coop in Greenlawn, N.Y.

Associated Press